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JUNE 1911

THE
BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE



Virginia Vane U.S.A. JAN 1912
Read the Panama Novelette in this issue

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MISS EDITH DECKER in "The Girl and the Kaiser." Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., N. Y.
Color Supplement, June, 1911, issue, THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

Do You Remember "When Knighthood Was in Flower?"

Its author's newest story
is in the May Red Book

Charles Major's novel, "When Knighthood Was in Flower," still ranks as the most popular and widely-circulated book of this generation. After a silence of several years its author is now writing short stories, and the first of them appears in the May issue of THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE—now on sale everywhere. It is the short story of the month. Its title is "Sweet Alyssum." She is notably a Charles Major girl. You must read her story.

Perhaps Onoto Watanna's story, "A Japanese Nightingale," recalls to you no less delightful hours. That charming story has a fitting companion in "Tokiwa," a tale of old Japan that Miss Watanna has written for the May RED BOOK, and Kyohei Inukai has illustrated.

Alfred Henry Lewis, whose knowledge of New York police methods is wider than that of any other writing man, contributes to the same issue—May—"Page, alias Kelly, Cashier," a story in which is revealed the exact methods employed by the real

detective when he takes to the trail of an embezzler.

And there is a laugh in store for you in Ellis Parker Butler's hilarious skit concerning a suffrage speech that was never delivered—"Mr. Peevy, on Votes for Women." It is a story wives should read aloud to their husbands.

There's something of the spirit of warring days in Reginald Wright Kauffman's tale of heroism, "The Sword of His Sire;" there's the boom of the waves off the Grand Banks in Frank Shaw's "The Temptation of Skipper Dennison;" there's the air of the wide-west in Forrest Crissey's tale of a righteous bad man, "The Man From the Front;" there's delight for you in Thornton Chambers' "The Congressional Detective Bureau," and a feeling of the "fourth dimension" in Elwood Brown's remarkable prize-fight story, "The Third Wind."

But there are sixteen stories in all, in the May RED BOOK—stories with the blood of life in them—stories of men and women who do things—drama that is dramatic.

The Red Book Magazine, Chicago

Editorial Department

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

The Blue Book Magazine

For July

THE Girl in the Case" is the delightfully romantic novelette which forms the leading feature of the July BLUE BOOK. A mystery of the most fascinating character lends piquancy to the narrative, and the atmosphere of the sea which pervades the story is most refreshing. As for "The girl" in question—well, you must read about her yourself. Another noteworthy feature of our next issue will be the second of "The Strange Cases of Doctor Wycherly;" these stories strike a new note in fiction and the exploits of the clever Doctor make the achievements of the ordinary detective seem relatively trite and commonplace. Besides this fine tale, another episode in "The Fortunes of the Gray Sox" will be described and additional adventures of "The King of Knaves" and "The Diplomatic Free Lance" will be narrated for your entertainment. These, together with some twenty more of the stories which have made THE BLUE BOOK famous, assure you of a rare treat in our July number—on the stands June 1st.

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JACK NORWORTH and NORA BAYES in "Little Miss Fix It."
Photograph by Sarony, New York



ETHEL BARRYMORE, as Kate, and CHARLES DALTON,
as Harry Sims, in "The Twelve Pound Look."
*Photograph by White, New York, Copyright, 1911, by
Charles Frohman*

"The Twelve Pound Look"

By J. M. Barrie

HARRY SIMS is a favored worshiper of success and his devotion to that exacting goddess has made him a preposterous compound of conceit, pomposity and bad manners. It has also been amply rewarded in the good things of this world and when the play opens, he is disclosed rehearsing before his wife, the ceremonies of his approaching knighthood. SIMS has advertised (without giving his name), for a typist to assist in answering the many congratulatory messages which have been received; and in reply to this advertisement, KATE—his first wife, who had left him years ago—appears on the scene. There is of course surprise on both sides at this unexpected meeting and when MRS. SIMS has left the room, SIMS accuses KATE of having run away with another man. KATE smiles in pitying derision at this charge and explains that she left SIMS for the simple reason that she could no longer endure him—could no longer endure the dullness of his constant success or the insufferable vanity which it had caused in him. She had accumulated £12 of her own, had bought a typewriter with it by which to earn her own living, and then had fled. She had since that time been independent and happy. "And" she remarks to SIMS before she goes, "If I were a husband, I would watch my wife very carefully to see that the twelve pound look never came into her eyes." When KATE has gone, MRS. SIMS comes into the room again; she has been reflecting on the contrast between the evident happiness of the poor stenographer, and the despondency experienced by her own surfeited self. "I wonder," she significantly asks of her husband, "if those typewriting machines are very expensive?"

Produced by Charles Frohman



"The Twelve Pound Look." MRS. SAM SOTHERN, as Mrs. Sime; CHARLES DALLON, as Harry Sime; and ETHEL BARRYMORE, as Kate Sime.
 Photograph by White, New York. Copyright, 1911, by Charles Frohman

"Everywoman"

A Modern Morality Play, in Five Canticles, by Walter Browne

"Everywoman" is the story of the pursuit of love and happiness. Warned at the outset by NOBODY, a spectral personage, EVERYWOMAN listens to the voice of FLATTERY, who appears in her mirror, and bids her go forth into the world in her quest for KING LOVE. TRUTH, an old woman, seconds NOBODY'S warning against FLATTERY. EVERYWOMAN fares forth, accompanied by her companions, YOUTH, BEAUTY and MODESTY, although MODESTY is against making the journey. EVERYWOMAN becomes a theatrical star, and YOUTH and BEAUTY are in the chorus, while MODESTY has been banished. There EVERYWOMAN meets WEALTH and WITLESS, together with BLUFF and STUFF, the two last being theatrical managers. EVERYWOMAN mistakes the voice of PASSION for that of LOVE. She discovers, also, the lack of genuine affection in the protestations of WEALTH.

EVERYWOMAN gives a supper in her apartment, and after PUFF, her press-agent, AGE, GREED, SELF, VANITY, WEALTH and WITLESS, guests at the feast, have left, WEALTH hides until GROVEL and SNEAK, her butler and footman, have locked up the house, and then comes back to renew his offer of luxury and ease if EVERYWOMAN will be his. She rebukes him, but now BEAUTY dies and EVERYWOMAN, with nothing left but YOUTH, again seeks WEALTH out.

With MODESTY and BEAUTY gone, WEALTH will have nothing to do with EVERYWOMAN, until finally, despondent and broken in health and spirit, she again meets TRUTH, who takes her home, accompanied only by CONSCIENCE, her hand-maiden, who has never left her. There at home, however, she finds LOVE and presumably lives happily ever after.

Produced by Henry W. Savage



Act I. "Everywoman." EDWARD MACKAY, as King Love; FRANK LACY as Flattery; LAURA NELSON HALL, as Everywoman, and SYDNEY JARVIS, as Passion. Photograph by White, New York



Act III. "Everywoman." LAURA NELSON HALL, as Everywoman; PATRICIA COLLINGE, as Youth; WILDA BENNETT, as Conscience, and AURORA PIATT, as Beauty. *Photograph by White, New York*



Act I, "Everywoman," SARAH COWELL LEMOYNE, as Truth; H. COOPER CLIFFE, as Notion; JULIETT DAY, as Modesty; LARA NELSON HALL, as Everyman; AURORA PIATT, as Beauty; and PATRICIA COLLINGE, as Youth. Photograph by White, New York.

"The Great Name"

By Victor Leon and Leo Feld

Adapted By James Clarence Harvey

ROBERT BRANDMEYER and JOSEPH HOFER have studied music together. The former has graduated with high honors but subsequently—owing to his refusal to cater to popular tastes—has been unsuccessful. HOFER, on the other hand, is technically a poor musician but his lightsome compositions have caught the public fancy. He cherishes, however, an ambition to win the critical approval of musicians also, and composes a symphony which he shows to his secretary, STEPHANIE DELIUS. Presently WIGAND, the director of the Philharmonic Orchestra, finds himself in need of a work to put on quickly to fill an unexpected gap in his program, and because of HOFER'S "great name" he agrees to give the "Waltz-King's" symphony a trial. That same day HOFER again meets his old friend BRANDMEYER, finds that he is very poor and that he has been unable to win a hearing for the fine symphony he has composed. At this juncture STEPHANIE tells HOFER that his own symphony is worthless; and out of sympathy for BRANDMEYER and contrition for a wrong he has done him, HOFER sends BRANDMEYER'S composition to WIGAND, pretending it is his own. WIGAND accepts the symphony, it is played with tremendous success, and when the enthusiastic audience calls for the author, HOFER leads out BRANDMEYER and confesses the deceit. BRANDMEYER thus comes into his own—and so too does HOFER, for STEPHANIE, won by his magnanimity, at last consents to be his.

Produced by Henry W. Savage



Act II. "The Great Name." FRANCES GAUNT, as Clara Brand,
ROBERT TANSEY, as Tristan Brand, RUTH CHATTERTON,
as Isolde Brand, and RUSS WHYTAL, as Robert Brand.
Photograph by White, New York



Act I. "The Great Name." HENRY KOLKER, as Hofer, the composer, and GERTRUDE DALLAS, as Stephanie Delius. *Photograph by White, New York*



Act I. "The Great Name." HENRY KOLKER, as Holter, the composer, plays the symphony in the presence of his family and friends.
Photograph by White, New York



NORA BAYES starring with JACK NORWORTH in "Little Miss Fix It." Photograph by Sarony, New York

"Little Miss Fix It"

By William J. Hurlbut and Harry B. Smith

The world is full of good souls who spend their time in trying to untangle threads of discord. LITTLE MISS FIX IT, known to her intimates as DELIA WENDELL, is a fascinating "almost" widow, who puts her feminine wiles to a severe test when she attempts not only to win back an errant husband to his cozy Long Island home, but also assumes the duty of a retriever on behalf of numerous week-end guests. Among these guests are BUDDIE ARNOLD and MARJORY, his wife, who are "almost" divorced; PERCY PAGET and BELLA KETCHAM, who are "almost" engaged; and HAROLD WATSON and ETHEL MORGAN, who are "almost" married. This would seem a dishearteningly discordant houseful; and the task of bringing peace and harmony to these several troubled hearts would appear one calculated to appall the most persevering busy-body. LITTLE MISS FIX IT however, rushes in where her betters would perhaps have feared to tread. She throws herself recklessly into this maelstrom of "almosts" and although she has an extremely busy time of it, eventually, being an "almost" widow of wonderful tact and perseverance, she is successful in winning back the errant husband, in calling off the divorce, in bringing about the marriage of the willing-to-be couple, and in straightening out the heart affairs of the "almost" engaged couple. And, lest we forget, there is SCOTTY, a blue-ribbon collie, who is "almost" human. SCOTTY is much in evidence and barks his way through the three acts of "Little Miss Fix It" with a great deal of vim.

Produced by Werba and Leuscher



Act II "Little Miss Fix It." JACK NORWORTH, in center, as his sister, OZA WALDORF; on the left, GRACE FIELD, as her sister, MARY; on the right, BESSIE GIBSON, HAZEL CONN, HELEN HILTON, MARY DUNCAN and ALICE CHASE. Photograph by WHITE, New York



Act I. "Little Miss Fix It." WILLIAM DANFORTH, as Percy Paget, and NORA BAYES, as Delia Wendell. Photograph by White, New York

"Seven Sisters"

Adapted by Edith Ellis, from the Hungarian of Ferencz Herczegh

MRS. GYURKOVICS, widow of a Hungarian army officer, has seven unmarried daughters, forming a perfect stepladder of feminine loveliness. Every effort is made to marry off KATRINKA, the eldest, following an established custom that the eldest daughter must be married before her sisters can gaze matrimonially upon the face of a man.

Besides KATRINKA, there are SARA, the second, ELLA, the third, MICI, the fourth—and family scapegrace—TERKA, the fifth, LIZA, the sixth, and KLARA the seventh.

BARON GIDA RADVANYI, nephew of BARON RADVANYI, is attentive to KATRINKA, unknown to her uncle. COUNT FERI HORKOY, a military man, is enamored of MICI. He bets MICI three kisses, one for each of the three eldest sisters, that he will find husbands for KATRINKA, SARA, and ELLA. HORKOY very cleverly mates KATRINKA with BARON RADVANYI, his superior officer. Then he mates ELLA with BARON GIDA RADVANYI and finally unites MISKA SANDORFFY, a professor of mathematics, with SARA.

HORKOY, free to pay his advances to MICI, does so, and is rebuffed by her, she thinking he is merely acting the gallant. At the wedding feast of her three sisters, MICI realizes she cares for HORKOY, but thinks she has lost him. When HORKOY finally appears at the feast, MICI welcomes him with gladness, and like a true sportswoman, pays her bet of three kisses, and accepts him as her betrothed.

Whereat MRS. GYURKOVICS, her mind matrimonially relieved, feels she has not lived in vain.

Produced by Daniel Frohman



Act II. "Seven Sisters." LAURETTE TAYLOR, as Mici; CHARLES CHERRY, as Lieutenant Horkoy, and JOHN B. HOLLIS, as Tony Teleky. Photograph by White, New York



Act I. "Seven Sisters." CHARLES CHERRY, as Lieutenant Horkoy, and
LAURETTE TAYLOR, as Mici. *Photograph by White, New York*



Act I. "Seven Sisters." ALICE JOHN as Kunkle; CARLOTTA DOTY as Jephtha; EVANGELINE as Phillis; ANNETTE TOLLOR as Wives; GLADYS SMITH as Lucia; VIRGINIA HAMILTON, as Liza; OLLIE WALKER as Klara; and CHARLES CHERRY, as Count Horkow. Photograph by White, New York.



Act IV. "Thais." CONSTANCE COLLIER, as Thais, and
TYRONE POWER, as Damiel. Photograph by White,
New York

"Thais"

By Paul Wilstach

DAMIEL, Abbot of a community of Holy Men, lives as a hermit in the desert of Thebaid, on the River Nile. In his youth, DAMIEL was a taster of the luxuries of life, though now his virtues inspire and sustain his fellow hermits.

Reports of the ravishing beauty of THAIS, a courtesan and actress in Alexandria, reach DAMIEL, and he becomes convinced he has a mission to convert her. He determines to seek out THAIS and goes to Alexandria, where he finds a friend of his worldly days, named NICIAS, who is a lover of THAIS. NICIAS ridicules the mission of DAMIEL, who is steadfast, however, and when he meets THAIS in the street, he fearlessly proclaims his mission. THAIS becomes infuriated with DAMIEL, but he persists in his course, and, gradually, against her will, she loses her affection for NICIAS and falls in love with DAMIEL. The Monk, on his part fights against this feeling, and there is a terrible conflict between love and duty. THAIS offers to go with DAMIEL, and renounce NICIAS and the world, and DAMIEL leads her to a retreat on the Mediterranean, while he goes back to the desert. DAMIEL finds his longing for THAIS too strong to withstand and goes to her, protesting his love. THAIS, outraged and disappointed in DAMIEL, points out to him his error. The beautiful THAIS is dying; and as she is passing away, DAMIEL, realizing the wrong he has committed, is regenerated once more into the Holy Man, and renounces the world; while the Courtesan-become-Saint is hallowed in the eyes of the Monk who became a Man.

Produced by Jos. M. Gaites



Act II. "Thais." ARTHUR FORREST, as Nicetas; CONSTANCE COLLIER, as Thais, and TYRONE POWER, as Daniel. Photograph by White, New York

"The Arrow Maker"

By Mary Austin

THE CHISERA is the medicine woman of the Sagarawites. SIMWA, the young arrow-maker of the tribe, is the secret lover of THE CHISERA, and when the time comes to choose a war-chief-tain, she persuades the elders that the Great Spirit wishes SIMWA to be chosen. The ARROW-MAKER is accordingly selected and he leads the braves to success. On his return however, the fact comes to light that SIMWA, in order to increase his power, had previously betrothed himself to BRIGHT WATER, daughter of the chief RAIN WIND. THE CHISERA protests and declares that she will withdraw good fortune from him, but he persists, and marries BRIGHT WATER. A year passes and when the Sagarawites again go to war, THE CHISERA refuses to call down the favor of the gods. The tribe is beaten; the chieftainship is taken away from SIMWA; wrathful because of his lost leadership, he tries to kill THE CHISERA. This attempt is frustrated; the Sagarawites beg THE CHISERA to relent; and at last, moved by the sorrows of the women, she once more invokes the celestial blessing upon the fortunes of the tribe and they march forth to victory.

Produced by the New Theatre

Act II. "The Arrow Maker." LEAH BATE-
MAN-HUNTER, as Bright Water, the
Chief's daughter. Photograph by
Byron, New York





Act I. "The Arrow Maker." EDITH WYNNE MATTHISON, as The Chieftess,
and FRANK GILMORE, as Simwa. Photograph by Byron, New York



Act IV. "The Piper." OLIVE OLIVER as Veronika,
JOHN TANSEY as Jan and EDITH WYNNE
MATTHISON as the Piper. Photograph
by Byron, New York

"The Piper"

By Josephine Preston Peabody

Old Hamelin town has been overrun by rats, but a mysterious, wandering PIPER, in consideration of a promised reward of a thousand guilders, charms the pestiferous beasts away by means of his magic pipe. When the rats are gone, however, the faithless burghers refuse to pay the reward and threaten the disappointed PIPER with arrest as a vagabond. In revenge, THE PIPER disguises himself as a strolling player, and accompanied by two friends, CHEAT-THE-DEVIL and MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER, he returns to Hamelin and by the irresistibly seductive notes of his pipe, lures away all the children to the enchanted region of the Hollow Hill. There they enjoy themselves hugely, while their frantic parents search for them in vain. In this endeavor, the burghers determine to make a nun of BARBARA, the sweetheart of MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER, in the hope that this sacrifice may appease the wrath of Heaven and restore to them their lost children. THE PIPER meets the ceremonial procession with BARBARA, at a cross-roads shrine, and again uses his magic pipe with such effect that he charms the burghers back to town, leaving BARBARA there to be united with her lover. After this VERONIKA, the mother of JAN—who is a cripple and one of the lost children—comes back to the shrine to pray for the return of her vanished child. She pleads with THE PIPER; he is at first obdurate, but later, softened by an appeal to "The Lonely Man" (as the image of the Savior at the shrine is called,) he relents. Convinced that the penurious burghers are at last truly penitent, THE PIPER once more tunes up his magic instrument and brings the children joyously home again to their parents.

Produced by the New Theatre



Act II. "The Piper." EDITH WYNNE MATTHISON, as the Piper, entertains the children under the hollow hill. Photograph by Byron, New York

"The Welcher"

By Robert H. Davis

DAN GASSAWAY is a large-hearted fellow who has run away from home as a boy, who has followed the races ever since, and who now at last has won a "100 to 1 shot" and finds himself possessed of a \$100,000 bank account. At this time also, he learns that a niece from Texas is in New York and in celebration, both of his good fortune and his niece's visit, GASSAWAY goes to an expensive hotel, hires a remarkable English butler, and orders a most elaborate dinner. When the butler ushers in the niece, however, instead of an elegant young lady, she proves to be a wee little lassie in short dresses. GASSAWAY rises to the situation, countermands the wine supper and orders instead a "plate of ice-cream with a big spoon." Soon uncle and niece are good friends and GASSAWAY learns of the fortunes of his long-lost sister, his guest's mother: her husband has just died, she is in straits and is threatened with eviction from the "two rooms and a sink" which is her home. Forthwith GASSAWAY makes up his mind, for the first time, to "welch"—on the big celebration he had planned. Instead, as the curtain falls, he is seen departing on his way to the relief of his long-lost sister.

Produced by Maclyn Arbuckle

MACLYN ARBUCKLE, as Dan Gassaway in
Robert H. Davis' new play "The Welcher."
Photograph by White, New York





VAUGHAN TREVOR, MACY ARBUCKLE, and AGNES REDMOND, in
Robert H. Davis' latest play, "The Willows."
Photograph by White, New York



Act I. "As a Man Thinks." JOHN MASON, as Seelig.
Photograph by Hall, New York

"As a Man Thinks"

By Augustus Thomas

MRS. FRANK CLAYTON discovers that her husband has not been always constant to her; resentment of his conduct is perhaps the chief motive which leads her into a relatively harmless flirtation with BENJAMIN DE LOTA. CLAYTON discovers this indiscretion of his wife's and in a fine fury orders her to leave the house. At this juncture however, DR. SEELIG steps in and forbids the departure of MRS. CLAYTON; her child is dangerously ill, and if it is to recover, must have the indispensable care of its mother. She remains, but at first there is no reconciliation. MRS. CLAYTON argues against the unfairness and iniquity of the "double code" by which her husband—demanding freedom for himself, but exacting undeviating fidelity from her—has insisted that they should live. It is pointed out to her however, that "while a woman knows she is the mother of her own child, a man's belief that he is its father must depend entirely upon his faith in the woman." In spite of this time-dishonored conflict of moral convictions and conducts however, this estranged couple are eventually reconciled; and with the lesser factors in the complication satisfactorily straightened out, the CLAYTONS seem in a fair way to work out a domestic code which shall prove acceptable to both and by which they can live happily in the future.

Produced by Sam S. and Lee Shubert



Act III. "As a Man Think." JOHN FLOOD, as Frank Clayton; CHARLOTTE IVES, as M. Dancer; AMELIA GARDNER, as Alice; S. H. H. and VINCENT SERRANO, as Julian Burrell. Photograph by Hall, New York



Act III. "As a Man Thinks." VINCENT SERRANO, as Julian Burall; CHAR-
LOTTE IVES, as Miss Dancer; JOHN MASON, as Vedah Seelig.
Photograph by Hall, New York

"Maggie Pepper"

By Charles Klein

MAGGIE PEPPER is a shop-girl in a New York department store; she is a canny, sophisticated, but large-hearted young person, with a mind of her own—and a forceful and characteristic way of expressing it. One day, for instance, she delivers a tirade to one of her fellow employees, concerning the feather-headed incompetence of JOE HOLBROOK, the son of the proprietor. This youth had just returned from his travels abroad, had been appointed general overseer of the store and—in MAGGIE'S opinion—was fast ruining the business by his mismanagement. Just as MAGGIE finishes her critical discourse, who should appear—from behind a corset exhibit—but JOE HOLBROOK himself. He has overheard MAGGIE'S most unflattering summary of his deficiencies, but instead of discharging her, he admits that she has preached a valuable sermon and rewards her by appointing her head buyer of the department. MAGGIE proves a great success in her new position, but her erstwhile fellow employees are jealous and conspire against her. It happens that some time before, MAGGIE had adopted a child named ZAZA, the daughter of an unfortunate shop-lifter. The conspirators spread the report that ZAZA is MAGGIE'S own illegitimate daughter and in other ways seek to discredit her. For a time MAGGIE'S enemies are successful. ZAZA is to be taken away from her, and HOLBROOK is almost convinced of her guilt. Eventually however, the plot fails: MAGGIE'S vindication is complete; and in the customary sequence of theatrical events, her wedding with HOLBROOK brings the play to a jocund conclusion.

Produced by Henry B. Harris



Act III. "Maggie Pepper." ROSE STAHL as Maggie Pepper. GRANT STEWART, as John Hargen, and GRACE CARLYLE, as Ethel Hargen.
Photograph by White, New York



Act II. "Maggie Pepper." ROSE STAHL giving instructions to two of her "models,"
Photograph by White, New York



Act I. "Maggie Pepper." ROSE STAHL, as Maggie Pepper examines the stock in her new department-store play. *Photograph by White, New York.*



Act I. "Maggie Pepper." ROSE STAHL, as Maggie Pepper; FREDERICK TRUES-
DELL, as Joe Holbrook. Photograph by White, New York

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Virginia Vare—U. S. A.

By HUGH C. WEIR

IT HAPPENED in Panama—where our engineers are supervising the digging of the Great Canal and where our army officers are laying out the fortifications that are to defend it. One morning the plans for these fortifications turned up missing from the safe of the Colonel commanding; he entrusted the investigation of this tremendously important theft to Lieutenants Morton and Donaldson; and very soon these two gallant and adventurous officers were fast entangled in a web of mystery and peril. Romance also played a decisive part and the two Lieutenants found Virginia Vare and Inez Montez to be ladies as dangerous as they were fascinating. The reader will find this novelette as delightful as it is unique—The Editor.

CHAPTER I

WHEN Morton reached over and tapped the man on the shoulder"—Carlton slowly relighted his cigar and glanced around the group in thorough enjoyment of his delayed climax.

The early-morning circle of men on the veranda of the Hotel Tivoli turned abruptly from a cynical study of the Panamanian cabman who was trying to flog his rheumatic mule into a credible ascent of the hill drive-way. "For Heaven's sake, man, out with it!" growled Donaldson of the Culebra engineering corps, as he tossed his cigaret stump over the rail.

Carlton surveyed him in mild astonishment. "You will let me tell my story in my own way, if—you—please!" Donaldson dug his hands resignedly in-

to his pockets, and Wilton of the Cristobal division shoved his chair noisily nearer the center of the group.

Carlton smoked tranquilly, until the proper degree of silence was restored.

"As I was saying," he continued, removing his cigar with a characteristic flourish, "when Morton tapped the fellow on the shoulder and said, 'I have the unpleasant duty, sir, of telling you that you cheat!' you can imagine the commotion that followed. The man had a gun in his hand before most of us knew what had happened. I was dealing at the time, and I was so thunderstruck that I dropped the cards to the table."

"And Morton," breathed Donaldson, "What—"

Carlton snorted. "He looked at that

gun and laughed. Yes—sir. He just stood there and laughed. And the fellow's finger was all the time on the trigger like a snake that's ready for a spring. If ever there was murder in a man's eyes! —But Morton turned his back just as he would on a mongrel dog. 'A man that will play with marked cards,' he sneered, 'wont shoot you in the open!' It was the finest exhibition of nerve, gentlemen, that I've seen on the Isthmus."

"How did the fellow end it?" Wilton interrupted in his disgust. "What did you say his name was—Bolivar, Dolli-var—"

"Oliver," Carlton snapped. "Frank Oliver of New York. He's living on inherited money, if we're to believe him—and on tainted money, or plainer still, on his nerve, if we're to take Morton's opinion. He struck Panama some time in the spring, and has been flying high at the Tivoli ever since. Of course, Morton had him in a trap last night. I guess he'd been suspecting him for a week or more. Anyway, Oliver saw there wasn't any use to make a bluff of it, so he threw down his cards and gave us a regular Raffles bow. He was just about to the door when Morton stepped after him. 'You owe this company an even hundred dollars, Mr. Oliver!' The man whirled as though he had stepped on a live wire. 'I believe that is the amount you have won this evening—or rather have *stolen*!' For a moment, Oliver didn't speak. Then he came back to the table and slowly counted out ten bills. I happened to be near his elbow and I saw that he had bitten his lips through until the blood showed. I think he would rather have lost a hand."

"I suppose he left this morning?" Donaldson ventured in the pause that followed.

Carlton looked up quickly. "No, he's still here and he had the impudence to bow to me! He and that chap Gillette were talking together in a corner of the lobby when I came down. By the way, Donaldson, I understand that you and Morton have had a rather ugly encounter with Gillette. Is there any truth in the story?"

Donaldson glanced uncertainly down the sweeping hotel veranda before he

replied. The group surveyed him with open curiosity. Panama gossip carried too many fantastic tales of Winslow Gillette, the ostensible agent of New York capital at the Canal Zone, for the question to pass unnoticed.

"Of course, I know what you mean," Donaldson began awkwardly, "but don't you think you can excuse me, old fellow? It's an ugly mess, and it concerns other people besides myself, you know."

Carlton smiled knowingly across the end of his cigar. Some one had once dubbed him "a Becky Sharp in trousers." Donaldson thought of the appellation grimly, as the older man ventured with the lingering inflection of club-room gossip—"If you refer to a certain charming señorita of the—"

Donaldson scowled and dropped his cigaret in a manner that would have warned any other man. But Carlton was too absorbed in his Melochrino and his story to heed. And besides he was creating a sensation and nothing was dearer to his gossip-loving nature.

"Tut, tut, Donaldson! It's all over the Isthmus. There's not an officer on the job that hasn't heard of Gillette's crooked mining stock and how you and Morton barely saved the fortune of old man Montez from his clutches!"

Donaldson hesitated at the frankly inquiring glances leveled at his somber face, and answered, obviously picking his words.

"I guess you've told about all there is to tell, Carlton. The chap came down from New York with a bunch of stock that a backwoods farmer would have shied at, and he picked a man to unload it on that knows as much about Wall Street as I know about ancient Egyptians! He might have succeeded if a friend of mine in 'the States' hadn't tipped me off, quite by accident." Donaldson thrust his hands back into his pockets with the air of a man who has finished a disagreeable task. "Morton and I happened to know Señor Montez rather well, and at our suggestion he turned Gillette down—and out of the house!"

"And what part did the piquant Señorita Inez play in this little melodrama?" jerked out Carlton with an unmistakable emphasis.

It was a coarse, almost brutal way of putting it. For a moment Donaldson looked into Carlton's cynically sneering eyes with a hard, set face and one hand clenched nervously about his slender chair-arm in an effort at restraint. Then he got slowly to his feet with the hard lines about his mouth deepening. Wilton, sensing the danger signals, reached suddenly over and gripped him by the wrist. Carlton took his cigaret sullenly from his teeth and squared his shoulders like an obstinate school-boy who refuses to flinch under the master's rod.

The electric silence was broken abruptly by a hurried step at the end of the veranda, and the hearty voice of a nut-brown, steel-muscled young man, much tanned by wind and sun, whose loose khaki uniform showed a figure that a Christy hero might have envied, whose rollicking blue eyes reflected the spirit of the born dare-devil of fortune, and whose square-chiseled chin hinted vividly of obstacles trampled underfoot. Lieutenant Ronald Morton was called by the women the most popular man in Panama—and by the men the most reckless. These adjectives, when coupled with the sources of information, were both significant and illuminating.

Morton kicked a convenient chair to his side. "Have you chaps heard the latest news?"

Wilton darted a quick glance of relief at the speaker. Donaldson fumbled for a fresh cigaret with a rather strained suggestion of nonchalance. The threatened clash was averted for the moment. Wilton strove heroically to bridge the sudden and suggestive gap of silence.

"I rather guess you have the advantage of us, Morton. But then you are as close to the Old Man as a Colon mosquito. What's in the wind now? Heaven save us from another Congressional junket!"

Morton grinned. "No, we're progressing. The Canal has been inspected by congressmen, muckrakers, suffragettes, and W. C. T. U. agents. This time, gentlemen, we are to entertain no less a visitor than the President of the United States himself!"

Wilton whistled. "But I thought that little event had been deferred until next year? What has caused the change?"

"I would suggest that you send a wireless to the White House and ask. I have no doubt that your signature would compel immediate attention to your request!"

Bates of the Panama railroad chuckled. "I understand we are to have another interesting visitor from Washington, gentlemen."

"The Canal must be getting popular," said Wilton cynically. "I think I'll order that new dress-suit I have had my eye on for the last six moons. Who is the notable, Bates?"

"A woman!"

"Pardon me, I am rather hard of hearing. Did I understand you to say a woman?"

"A young woman, a fascinating woman, a clever woman, an altogether too dangerous woman for a heart and head like yours, Wilton! Her name is Vare—Virginia Vare."

In the laugh which followed, the sudden flush that flooded Morton's face was noticed by only one pair of eyes—but they were watching for it. From his vantage point on the rail, Carlton lounged nearer the unsuspecting lieutenant, ready to launch another of his barbed arrows. In Wilton's next words he found his opportunity.

"Surely I have heard that name before, Bates? I don't like to discuss a lady like this, but—"

"Ask Morton," drawled Carlton with an acid grin. "They have met before, I believe."

Morton half rose from his chair with a deepening of his flush. "Really, Carlton—"

"I do believe, gentlemen, he's blushing! Upon my soul, Morton, I thought you were too careless a heart-breaker for that!"

"By the way, old chap, do you know she's due here now—the next steamer, I believe? Hadn't heard that pleasant little piece of news before, eh? If you'll take the advice of an old campaigner, my boy, who has seen something of women as well as of bullets, you'll take good care to keep her and Inez Montez apart! They say she is even more of a volcano than that spit-fire brother of hers, Enrico. These Panamanian girls are perfect furies when—"

"Lieutenant Morton—the Colonel presents his compliments and desires to see you and Lieutenant Donaldson in his office at once!"

The ramrod figure of the orderly on the edge of the group stood as stolidly erect as though he were an automaton. With his finger-tips touching his hat-brim, he stared woodenly ahead into space, supremely unconscious of the belligerent crisis he had interrupted. The Colonel's orders could not have arrived more opportunely had he been a spectator of the scene. Another fraction of a moment and Morton's tingling fingers would have found lodgment on that portion of Carlton's anatomy termed the nasal organ.

As it was, he hesitated in sharp indecision, waging swift battle between his duty as an officer and his inclination as a man. Then without a word, he whirled on his heels and strode stiffly down the veranda. There are occasions when a man's back is a startling mirror of his emotions. The staring group in Morton's rear had no need to study his face.

Donaldson caught up to the other's shoulders in half a dozen strides, fell into sullen step with him, and was nearly to the hotel door before Morton grunted an acknowledgment of his presence.

"Why couldn't the Chief have held his confounded orders back ten minutes?" Donaldson growled.

"That, my boy," said Morton gloomily, "is one of those inexplicable workings of that mysterious agency, which some men call Providence and others call fool's luck!"

"If Carlton were a woman, he would put in his time hanging over his neighbor's back fence."

"And being a man, he ought to be tossed over the back fence without regard to where he lands on the other side!"

Donaldson turned a side glance toward the other from the corner of his eye.

"I say, Mort, you never told me that you knew Virginia Vare!"

"I don't, well enough to talk about it."

"Then Carlton, as usual, was exaggerating?"

"What about?"

"Well, he seemed to infer, you know, that—"

"Don't be any more of an ass than you can help, Donaldson!"

"But you see I know you of old, Mort! I haven't bunked with you and fasted with you and fought death at your shoulder for seven years for nothing. Do you mean to tell me that you were indulging in one of your characteristic flirtations at Washington last year with—*her*?"

Morton suddenly squared back his shoulders. "May I ask why the emphasis on the '*her*'?"

Donaldson whistled. "You're a man of the world, Mort, and you know enough of government gossip to understand Virginia Vare's rating as well as I do. If she has blinded *you*, I will take my hat off to her!"

Morton reached the end of the corridor that swung into the suite of the Colonel's rooms, before he answered.

"I know, Donaldson, that what I say to you I am saying to a friend. Believe me, that Miss Vare is a very much misunderstood and maligned young woman!"

Donaldson, slightly in advance of the other, came to a halt so abruptly in the narrow hall that Morton was forced to do likewise.

"What you need, old chap, is a lunacy commission to examine into your sanity. You've got it bad. 'Misunderstood!' 'Maligned!' Ye Gods! Virginia Vare is the most notorious spy in Washington, without principle and without a flag, willing to sell her services to the government that bids the highest! Why! even the card-cheat and adventurer, Frank Oliver, that you unmasked last night, is hand and glove with her! And I happen to know that his pal, Winslow Gillette, has openly boasted of his friendship with the girl."

Morton shook his head with a strange steadiness. "We're too old friends, Don, to quarrel over a woman! Miss Vare is nothing to me, I assure you. I thought she had gone out of my life entirely. But apart from that, some day—"

"Yes, some day," Donaldson growled, knocking at the Colonel's door, "you will wake up to the wiles in a woman's smiles!"

A curt, impatient voice from the other side of the panel answered the young officer's rap before his knuckles had hardly touched the wood. Donaldson turned the knob, and flung back the door on a scene that brought the two men to a sudden and amazed halt.

In the center of the apartment, a grizzled officer in his shirt sleeves stood smoking a short, evil-smelling, briar pipe. On a stand before him—bare but for it—stood an open dispatch box. To a stranger, there might have been nothing remarkable in the view thus presented. But to Morton and Donaldson, who had campaigned under Colonel Pendergrast for a span of eventful years, it could not have been more startling.

Of all his various characteristics, Colonel Arthur Pendergrast, in command of the Panama Canal, was most noted for two—his insistence on letter-perfect discipline, and his never-failing, eye-straining neatness. The rumped condition of his usually precisely-parted white hair, the straggling stubble of beard on his chin, the absence of collar and cuffs, admitted of but one explanation. The Colonel had been the victim of a crushing calamity. And if further evidence of the fact were needed, it was found in the bull-dog pipe between his lips. The Colonel was an inveterate smoker, but he cherished a persistent and emphatic distrust of a pipe. His tobacco was consumed in the form of his favorite cheroots, of which he used from a dozen to two dozen a day. It was indeed whispered among the older officers that on occasions of sudden crisis or unexpected distress, the cigar had disappeared to be replaced by a certain much-battered, time-worn briar, which served the double purpose of keeping obnoxious questioners from his neighborhood by the pungent nature of the odor it exhaled, and holding its owner in check by the very vileness of the tobacco it contained.

Here, then, was the fabled pipe of antiquity, and Morton and Donaldson, remembering the legend, fell back, properly abashed and impressed.

"Why don't you come in and shut the door? Have you forgotten how?"

The Colonel obviously was irritable to a degree, as well as worried.

Donaldson closed the door, and straightway fell to sneezing as the fumes of the pipe struck him in the face. The Colonel glared in silence, and Morton barely repressed a chuckle. The next moment, however, the comedy of the situation was abruptly and effectually blotted out. It took one gesture and four sentences to do it. The Colonel waved his hand toward the open dispatch box, and spoke four sentences thus:

"Last night, gentlemen, that case held the most important documents ever prepared on the Isthmus. They were the plans for the complete fortification of the Panama Canal. This morning they are gone. Gentlemen, they have been stolen—stolen, while I slept with *this*!"

And the Colonel slowly and significantly tapped the muzzle of a six-shooter, whose dull, blue barrel seemed to scowl in thorough sympathy with its owner.

CHAPTER II

It was Morton who first broke the tense silence that followed, and he was surprised at the curious calmness of his voice.

"If a robbery has taken place, Colonel, there must be some clue to the perpetrator, surely. Have you found anything at all of this nature, may I ask?"

Colonel Pendergrast strode to the window and back, with his pipe spurting belligerent clouds of blue smoke above his head.

"Clues?" he snapped. "Clues? The robber and the papers could not have vanished more completely and with as little trace, if the Pacific surf yonder had rolled over them!"

"Has the room been searched?" queried Donaldson, mechanically speculating how many times that morning the scarred pipe-bowl had been emptied and refilled.

"What do you think I am, young man?" bellowed the Colonel. "The room has been raked over with a fine comb from corner to corner. I am no Sherlock Holmes, but I have horse sense. Our man entered by the window. There is no mystery about *that* part of it. If you will take the trouble to examine the

glass, you will see where he has cut his way to the catch. This hotel was made for burglars. Some fool built a veranda under every window on purpose for light-fingered gentry, and not content with that, ran it along the whole length of the building, so a thief could play hide-and-seek through every chamber on the floor. No, *that* isn't a mystery. The puzzle goes a step farther. *How* did our burglarious friend know the plans were here? *How* did he know they were in the dispatch box and the box in that safe in the corner? *How* did he know his way into the safe? The combination has never left my wallet. I am the only person on the Isthmus who knew it, and I happen to have had enough experience with safes in my thirty years' handling of important army documents to know that it is a devilish awkward combination, too awkward for even a professional to pick out unless he had my paper or a copy of it at his elbow. And *that* paper, gentlemen, has not been taken from my person even by my own hands for twelve hours!"

"How long after the writing of the combination did you place it in your wallet?" asked Morton shrewdly.

The Colonel glared through suddenly narrowed eyes. "Ten minutes at the outside! It was probably less. I was very busy at the time, and my desk was crammed with papers. But your deduction wont hold, Lieutenant. I was never out of this room, never more than five feet away, and I was alone—absolutely alone! Even José, that good-for-nothing nigger of mine, wasn't here, and if he had been, it would have done him no good. José can't even make the cross for his name unless some one holds that awkward wrist of his!"

Morton stepped over to the rifled safe and stood tapping its edge reflectively.

"You slept with the combination on your person, Colonel, I infer. Did you sleep soundly?"

"Did I sleep soundly?" The Colonel's pipe again spurted forth an angry blue cloud. "Do you imagine that a man who has spent eighteen years campaigning on the frontier *ever* sleeps soundly? After listening for an Apache war-whoop or the crack of a carbine for the better part of a generation every time I

closed my eyes, the buzzing of a mosquito would bring me up like an alarm clock!"

"And yet the robbery was apparent as soon as you opened your eyes this morning," Morton persisted.

The Colonel's smoke ascended in short, fitful jerks like an engine exhausting steam.

"There is the key to the puzzle," he exploded. "If you can tell me how any man could have entered this room, opened that safe, located those plans, and escaped, while I slept, I will begin to credit some of the reputation which you have earned as an astute officer, Lieutenant Morton. What have you to offer, Donaldson? Out with it, man, if you have a suggestion—or anything resembling a suggestion!"

Donaldson shook his blond head. "You might as well ask me to read a blank slate, I fear."

The Colonel paced across to the door, back to the window, and thence to the safe. The two younger officers gazed at each other with silently uplifted eyebrows. Colonel Pendergrast was too thoroughly imbued with the vigor of the service to have summoned them merely for a purposeless conference. What was the motive back of it all? Their superior's next two sentences answered the query with the abruptness of a rifle ball crashing into a bull's eye.

"I have asked you here, gentlemen, as the two officers on the Isthmus most fitted for the delicate task of tracing those papers and bringing them back!" The Colonel snapped open his watch much as he snapped out his words. "In the space of the next twenty-four hours—it is now ten A. M.—the stolen plans *must* be returned to my hands! Never mind *how* they have been stolen now. The point is to recover them—not next week, nor next month, but *now*!"

"The next steamer out of Panama is the *Gossard*, sailing for Peru in the morning. I need not tell you that the chances are a thousand to one that the Canal-plans will leave by that boat, if they are not recovered before she swings away from the dock. The thief will not stay on Panama soil a moment after his first opportunity for escape. Whether a professional government spy

is back of this, or merely a free-lance seeking the highest market, our man will rely on either meeting his customer in South America, or taking another boat from there for his destination. He will not wait for a more direct steamer. He will not *dare* wait. If we are to stop him, we must do so before the *Gossard* sails, and I leave the task of finding the man, and the method of stopping him, to you. Do you follow me?"

Donaldson stared, scowling, out of the window. Morton glanced at his back, saw that it was hopeless to expect him to take the initiative, and finally faced his superior in the stiffly erect attitude of an officer, who is too much of a soldier to shirk a disagreeable duty.

"I am under your orders, sir!" he said simply.

The Colonel pondered the words with knitted brow.

"You don't like the task, Lieutenant?" he asked bluntly.

Morton flushed. "Since you put it that way, sir, it seems to me that the work is that of a detective rather than a soldier. Understand, I am not criticising, but I would personally feel a whole lot more confident of our success if a veteran Secret Service man were directing me. Tracking burglars, is not—er—one of the subjects they teach you at the 'Point,' sir!"

The Colonel's features relaxed for an instant into what might have been construed as a sympathetic grin, but it was swallowed almost instantly in a deepened scowl.

"True, Morton, true! But hang it all, man, there is no Secret Service agent within five hundred miles of the Canal, and this isn't a matter that I dare trust to an ordinary detective. Do you realize the importance of those plans? If even a whisper of their loss should reach Washington in the present agitation against our fortifying the Canal, we would be plunged into a mess of international complications that would make a worse racket than a dozen dynamite blasts at Culebra Cut! No, gentlemen, it's a task we must face, ourselves, whether it's to our liking or not. I have tried to be frank with you, but, of course, if you wish to withdraw—"

The line in Morton's back stiffened

still more, and his hand instinctively raised in salute.

"I am a soldier, Colonel, and I do not dodge my duty!"

Donaldson still stood staring out of the window, with as little sign of animation as a post. Morton stared at him in surprise, and began edging closer, with the amiable intention of giving him a kick to stir him into life.

"May I ask, sir, if Captain Shanton and the Canal police have been notified of this affair?" he asked, with the purpose of covering his flank movement.

The Colonel hesitated curiously, and fumbled awkwardly with his tobacco pouch.

"Let me answer the question like this, Lieutenant. So far as your movements are concerned, the police will be an unknown quantity. You will act entirely independent of any other agency. In fact—"

The darting figure of a suddenly electrified man, with arms extended and lips set in a hard, straight line, caromed into the Colonel's ample stomach. As the latter fell back, purple-faced and gasping, the crouching figure bounded across the room like a football player sprinting toward a goal post. It was Lieutenant Donaldson. From an attitude of wooden aloofness at the window, he had sprung into an abrupt and amazing activity, in its way more incomprehensible than his preoccupied silence. The next instant he reached the door, flung it open, and bounded into the corridor. But almost in the same breath he was back, and in his vice-like grasp was the form of a struggling, squirming rat of a man, whose distorted, sallow features were blanched with terror.

CHAPTER III

Colonel Pendergrast subsided weakly into a cane-rocker at his elbow, sweeping the pile of books and papers, stacked in the seat, to the floor. With that strange acuteness for trivial details which a moment of great action or suspense brings, Morton noticed that the Colonel still clutched his briar and that it was shaking a cloud of flaky, white ashes over his trousers.

Donaldson entered the room backwards, with his fingers still fast in his prisoner's collar and shaking him with much the same vindictive satisfaction shown by a bull-dog worrying his prey. The lieutenant kicked the door shut with a bang, and bracing himself back against it, swung his captive before him with an abruptness which made the man's teeth sink into his dry, protruding tongue. It was then that Morton recognized him.

"José!" he muttered. And he glanced swiftly toward Donaldson's firmly set face, his eyes voicing his unspoken question. The latter nodded curtly, and his hand gave the prisoner a fresh shake with each nod.

"Yep, Morton, he was spying! Thought I heard him at the key-hole five minutes ago, but wanted to let the beggar betray himself. That was why I let you do the talking and listened."

Colonel Pendergrast straightened gingerly to an upright position and glared at captor and captive as his left hand rubbed his stomach sympathetically.

"So you are a spy, José! A spy caught red-handed!" There was an ominous quiet in the suddenly lowered tones. Donaldson slackened his hold sufficiently to permit his prisoner to stand erect.

The Colonel's keen, gray eyes swept his servant like an auger boring into the recesses of the man's brain. Then reaching for his pouch, he carefully knocked the ashes from his pipe, refilled it, and blew a contemplative smoke-cloud toward the ceiling. Morton saw a chair at his hand, surveyed it doubtfully for a moment, and ended by clasping his hands behind his back and standing. The silence grew tense, almost oppressive.

"Once, years ago in New Mexico," the Colonel began abruptly and irrelevantly, "I found a renegade Greaser at my key-hole, in league with a band of cattle thieves. He was much of your same type, José." The Colonel took his pipe from his mouth. "We shot him!" José's under lip twitched like a terror-stricken dog's, panting.

"Put your prisoner in that chair in the corner, Donaldson," the Colonel ordered suddenly. The Lieutenant jerked his man, sprawling, to the position in-

dicated. Colonel Pendergrast rose to his feet and walked across to his desk. When he turned, his fingers were caressing the blue barrel of his revolver.

"This is an extreme situation, gentlemen, and requires extreme measures. I am afraid you are about to witness an execution. There is only one penalty which will properly punish a spy. Two minutes from now, I am going to shoot that man in the corner. Lieutenant Morton, will you kindly hold my watch and tell me when I shall fire?"

José sat staring woodenly at the trio of grim faces before him. He was a little, wizened, flabby-faced man, with a slanting forehead like a dog's—a man to excite contempt rather than anger.

"You are a spy, José—therefore a liar," continued the Colonel, fingering his revolver restlessly. "But I am going to take a chance on your telling me the truth. Incidentally, I am offering you a chance to save your worthless life." A flicker of relief sprang into the servant's staring eyes and he straightened mechanically. "You haven't the brains to play eavesdropper of your own accord. Who stationed you at the key-hole? The truth, man, or so help me—"

José's fingers tightened convulsively about his chair-arm like the claws of a hungry bird. But his lips stayed obstinately silent in their same distorted position of terror, suggesting a steel trap that had become wedged. The three men before him exchanged involuntary glances of wonder. José was hardly the type to face death in defense of any cause.

"Once more!" the Colonel grated. "This is your last chance, my man. If you are banking on the fact that I am afraid to shoot, let me assure you that your body would be carted out of here without the slightest inquiry unless I should suggest an explanation. And I pledge you my word that I will bore a hole through your temple in something less than one minute unless you come to your senses!"

But José still sat immovable. Great, dripping beads of perspiration streaked his sallow face, and his white, up-turned eyeballs gave him an appearance almost uncanny. It was evident that the man was in the throes of an

overpowering terror, and the fact only served to increase the amazing quality of his silence. Colonel Pendergrast took three rough strides across the room, and suddenly pressed the cold muzzle of his revolver against the servant's damp forehead. A shudder as of an electric shock ran through the man's stiffening form. If ever a man were expecting to be hurled into eternity in a space of seconds, it was he—but his wooden silence remained unbroken.

"When I count three," the Colonel began in a low, tense tone, so low that it was almost a whisper, "I fire! One, two—"

José's lips parted in a low, despairing moan like the spent cry of a harried animal; his fingers jerked spasmodically, a flicker of animation struggled for an instant in his set eyes, and then his little shriveled body slid from his chair to the floor like a log.

Colonel Pendergrast took a quick, involuntary step backward in his bewilderment, and stood staring down at the motionless form at his feet, with the veins of the hand, which clutched his unused revolver, standing out taut and rigid. Morton bent over the body on the floor with the swift dexterity of the man used to quick handling of emergencies and with the bluntness to emotional details, born of his rapid-fire service in Cuban battlefields and in Philippine jungle.

"Dead?" questioned Donaldson curtly.

Morton shook his head. "Weak heart, but he'll come out of it. Your bluff was too realistic, Colonel!"

Colonel Pendergrast silently extended his weapon. It had not even been cocked!

"Better ring for the hospital ambulance," said the older officer crisply, as Morton rose from his hasty examination. "Get Blake on the 'phone, Lieutenant, and tell him to come to the side door. No fuss, mind you! I want to keep this little affair to ourselves until our man recovers consciousness. He's got too big a secret locked between those lips to take any chances. Hand me that brandy flask, Donaldson!"

José was still unconscious when the brisk, white-ducked form of Surgeon Blake swung through the door.

"Fit of some kind," the Colonel explained laconically as the other's hand shoved itself through the cotton shirt and felt for the heart. "Anything serious, Blake?"

The doctor glanced up with raised eyebrows. "The man's had a fearful shock, Colonel. He may pull through, or—"

"You mean he'll probably die?"

"No, he'll probably recover."

The Colonel breathed a sigh of relief.

"With his mind a blank," the surgeon completed, and the Colonel's sigh was abruptly checked.

Morton and Donaldson slowly followed the white stretcher as it was tilted out into the corridor toward the waiting ambulance at the side veranda. Blake lingered at the door at a sign from the Colonel.

"Are you busy to-day, Doctor?"

"Always am, sir! Morton just caught me and no more. Why?"

"Because until that man recovers—or dies, I want you to keep at his side, not in the building, or in the corridor, but at his side!"

The surgeon whistled.

"And the instant you know his fate, let me hear! This is an important matter, Blake—a vitally important matter!"

Blake hesitated. "State secret?"

"Er—something like that!" And the Colonel puffed viciously at his briar in a desperate effort to fan the dead ashes into a spark of life.

The hotel steps and porch seemed deserted as Morton jumped back from the ambulance after a last glance at the scarcely breathing man within. Donaldson offered his cigaret case silently; Morton thoughtfully selected one of the slender white tubes of tobacco and bent forward to catch the last flicker of the other's match.

As he did so, the stealthy rustling of a curtain in one of the middle windows of the building caught his eye. The movement was so swift and the impression so vague that he was about to dismiss it with a shrug, when it was repeated. This time, in the narrow slit exposed, he saw the profile of a watching face, pressed flat against window corner. But it was gone almost on the instant it was revealed.

CHAPTER IV

The Lieutenant marked the position of the curtain, and darted swiftly up the steps, with a jerk of his hand toward Donaldson. "What's up, Mort?" the latter gasped.

"Tell you later!" was the curt response.

Morton slackened his steps at the hotel office, and forcing back his appearance of hurry, sauntered toward the desk.

"Can you tell me, please, who occupies the room directly in the center of the right, ground-floor veranda?"

The clerk reached toward his chart and his finger moved slowly along its edge.

"That would be 'Twenty-eight,' Lieutenant. Your question is easily answered. That is empty at the present time."

Morton tossed his cigaret away with a frown.

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Absolutely. It hasn't been occupied for a week."

Morton smothered an impatient exclamation, turned away, and then faced the clerk again.

"If it's not too much trouble, Williams, can you tell me who has the rooms adjoining 'Twenty-eight?'"

The young man's fingers again crisscrossed over the chart, and Morton leaned across the desk in his eagerness. The vision of the stealthy drawn curtain and the staring face at the corner could *not* have been a figment of his imagination.

"A man by the name of Gillette; Winslow Gillette of New York has number 'Thirty,'" the clerk announced suddenly. "Number 'Twenty-six' is occupied by—here, I have it!—by Mr. Oliver, Frank Oliver. Is that all?"

For a moment, Morton stood drumming thoughtfully on the desk. He aroused himself with an effort.

"Yes, I think that will be all, Williams—for the present!" And then he repeated softly, "So Mr. Gillette is in 'Thirty' and Mr. Oliver in 'Twenty-six'! How curious, how *very* curious!"

"Oh, by the way, Lieutenant," called the clerk suddenly. "Here is a note for

you. I declare, I almost forgot it—and the address looks like a woman's handwriting!" he added jocularly.

At Morton's shoulder, Donaldson crammed his hands into his pockets and watched his friend with narrowed eyes. From his position he had caught a side view of the delicate inscription and the quick flush on the other's face, and he muttered a brief and emphatic ejaculation under his breath, complimentary neither to his brother-officer nor his fair correspondent.

Morton carefully ripped open the square envelope, sniffed cautiously at the elusive suggestion of perfume it exhaled, and read the sheet of blue, monogrammed paper that fluttered to his hand with the frown of a man who is confronted with a sudden and unexpected puzzle.

Donaldson's eyes were shrewdly searching his face when he glanced up. Morton jammed the note into his coat pocket, hesitated as though about to speak, then dropped into thoughtful step with the other and swung out onto the hotel veranda. An abrupt sense of awkwardness fell between the two.

Morton's hand tapped the pocket, wherein reposed the crumpled note, doubtfully.

"I'm in something of a quandary, Donaldson," he blurted out abruptly.

Donaldson stared down the drive-way in uncompromising silence.

"I presume it's hardly the thing to exhibit a lady's personal note," Morton floundered, "but this is a case, old man, where—oh, hang it all! You can guess the rest of it. You know whom my little letter is from, of course!"

Donaldson turned a wooden face from his study of the drive-way.

"Really, Morton, you credit me with a sixth sense. I assure you, my dear fellow, that—"

"Do you know, Don, that there are occasions when you are the most exasperatingly unsympathetic chap I ever knew! You know as well as I do that this note is from Inez Montez. She wants to see me—at once!"

Morton drew the perfumed sheet from his pocket, and held it toward the other in silence.

Donaldson accepted it with a curt

nod. "It's a duty I don't mean to shirk, Mort. When a petticoat flutters on the horizon, you need a guardian angel, and it's up to me just now to undertake that elevating rôle. So she wants to see you, does she—at once? Let me see just how the dashing señorita words her ingenuous request!"

Donaldson's eyes fell, scowling, over the lines of the dainty missive in his hand. Morton paced to the other end of the veranda and back, striving desperately not to appear interested.

Inez Montez was a young lady who showed peculiar characteristics of three nationalities. Born of a Panamanian father and a French mother, she had inherited the fiery temper of the former and the piquant defiance of convention of the latter. Added to these facts, a girlhood in the Panama savannahs with a retinue of servants at her back, and a young womanhood in Paris and New York, with an elastic allowance and a blind chaperon, had developed rather than lessened the influences of heredity. When three months past her twentieth birthday, she returned to the square, white house, facing the Pacific surf, she brought back a blend of Parisian Bohemianism and American frankness, which made even Panama rub its eyes and stare. The note in Donaldson's hands breathed something of these qualities. It was the message of an agitated woman in distress—or was it hysteria, Donaldson questioned himself grimly.

MY DEAR MR. MORTON:

Can you not come to me at once? I must see you without delay on a matter of vital importance to you—and to your Government!

INEZ MONTEZ.

"Have you fathomed it?" asked Morton bluntly.

"Impossible—with the signature of that girl at the bottom!" was the terse rejoinder.

"If I could stick along at your elbow, Mort, I would say 'go,' but as long as you've got to face the battery of the señorita's black eyes alone and unaided, I tremble, my boy!"

Morton took a quick step nearer, and lowered his voice, as he jerked out a terse description of the incident of the stealthy watcher at the window of

Twenty Eight and the statements of the clerk in the hotel-office.

Donaldson heard him through with an unpleasant scowl.

"If you take my advice, we'll face Messrs. Oliver and Gillette with the same argument that the Old Man used on José, and we'll do it now!"

"You forget that we haven't the slightest foundation of fact against them," cautioned Morton.

"What do you suggest, then? To sit still while they make off with their plunder?"

"Do you remember that summer in the Philippines, Donaldson," said Morton suddenly. "—When we followed the trail of those Moros for hours without their knowing it, and how when we did attack, we had them hemmed in a gully with no escape? We've got to shadow the gentlemen inside in the same way!"

"And if we don't find the convenient gully?" growled Donaldson cynically.

"But we will!" said Morton. "And anyhow, it's the only safe line of action we've got. Will you stay on guard until I get back?"

"So you're going?" said Donaldson gloomily, as Morton held up his hand sharply to a yawning cabman at the corner of the building. Morton sprang into the vehicle at the steps and gave his directions to the driver without reply.

Donaldson put his hands to his mouth. "If you're not here by lunch time, Mort, I shall come after you!"

Morton glared back over his seat.

"And remember, old man, that that girl's eyes are as dangerous as—"

Morton shook his fist, and the carriage rolled around the bend of the hill, drowning the suddenly lowered end of Donaldson's sentence—which sounded strangely like a certain short and ugly word, unmentionable in a polite narrative.

CHAPTER V

The Imp of Fate was playing strange pranks in the Canal Zone that morning. When Lieutenant Morton sank back against the frayed cushions of his jolting carriage, he gave himself a full thirty minutes of sober, uninterrupted

reflection before his interview with the piquant Señorita of the Savannahs, and he had a portentous feeling that he would need it. But he was reckoning without a third factor in the fragile web of circumstances.

Fate, in a mood of perverse contrariness was making ready to take a hand. Morton's first intimation of a new coil in the tangle of events came with a sudden backward jerk of the carriage, an abrupt collision of his head with the edge of the seat, and a guttural, unintelligible shout from the driver.

The Lieutenant struggled to his knees in the bottom of the vehicle, clutching the front seat with a dazed instinct of preservation as the rearing mules plunged against the shafts, and strove to free themselves from their harness. The driver, braced back against the buckboard, was making a bad matter worse by frantic see-sawing of the lines and a continuance of his raucous shouts. Ahead, Morton saw the suddenly disturbing factor in the scene with a vividness which needed no second glance to emphasize.

Down the narrow, wretchedly paved alley, which Panamanian exaggeration had dignified with the title of "Avenue," a second carriage was plunging, drawn by a pair of native mules as belligerent as those attached to his own vehicle, and driven by a native coachman even more muddle-headed than his own terror-stricken driver.

The advancing team obviously had taken fright, and their fright quite as obviously had been increased rather than lessened by the efforts of their driver to overcome it. As a result, the mules had taken the bits into their teeth and were dashing down the tunnel of a street with wildly tossing heads and foaming jaws, while the carriage behind them lurched like a ship in a heavy gale, every instant threatening to end its dash in a splintered wreck against the curb.

Just ahead of Morton's swaying vehicle, a sharp, right angled corner led into a squalid side street. The driver, with a flash of intelligence and a last spurt of strength, threw his weight suddenly on the inner line and almost jerked the mule to which it was attached off its feet, as the team whirled the cab

around the bend. Danger of collision, at least, was averted, but as Morton darted a backward glance down the avenue, preparing to breathe a deep sigh at the escape, two new developments in the situation brought a low cry from him.

The first was the ignominious desertion of the driver of the runaway mule-team from his post. Maddened by terror, the man suddenly abandoned the reins and sprang for the curb, reaching it in a sprawling heap as his vehicle swung on. The second of the two developments was the discovery that the passenger whom he had left was a girl—as nearly as Morton could judge in the blurred view, an American girl.

The pulses of any man, even ordinarily red-blooded, would have quickened at the sight. To Morton, with all of his susceptibility to the appeal of beauty in distress, the discovery left but one recourse. In his saner moments, the question of a rescue might have caused even the dare-devil lieutenant to pause. But this was emphatically not one of Morton's sane moments. His cab was hardly touching the cobble-stones of the side-street when he sprang to the ground and darted forward in a slightly slanting line toward the pounding mules ahead. To attempt to seize the reins from the pavement was a sheer impossibility. Morton gradually slackened his steps and braced the muscles of his arms and thighs. At the "Point" he had held the records for high jumping and hurdles against all contestants, and his ability as a leaper had not left him with the years. Could he clear the wheels of the lurching cab, however, and reach the driver's deserted seat before the vehicle passed him? By one of those queer freaks of memory in a sudden crisis, in the second in which he held himself poised, waiting, Morton recalled the old feat of the circus lady and the hoop. He mechanically reached up to crush his hat tighter, and for the first time discovered that he was bare-headed. Then his lips tightened, a dark, swaying blur reached his shoulders; a faint scream as of a woman's hysterical tones penetrated dully to his senses; and he sprang upward and outward, with knees doubling and his arms wildly extended.

One hand caught a swaying edge of

the buckboard and was torn away before his groping fingers could tighten. A wheel crashed into his knee with a force that sent a cruel wrench of pain tingling through his body. And then he threw himself desperately forward and was conscious that he had struck a very hard, very uneven surface and that his left shoulder was either broken or badly bruised. But he knew that he was in the carriage. The jolting was enough to tell him this.

The whole affair from the moment of his dash from his own vehicle to his reckless leap could have been measured in seconds. To Morton, however, as he raised himself unsteadily against the buckboard and mechanically reached for the swaying lines, it seemed that several moments must have elapsed since his feet left the pavement.

At this juncture, he realized that his salvation was in the lap of the gods. If the lines had become torn from the buckboard, the control of the team was beyond his power. The fate, however, that had pitchforked him into the turmoil of events, was disposed to reward him with a friendly hand. The reins were easily within his reach, and Morton had wrapped them about his wrists and thrown himself backward in a rigid brace against the seat almost before his dazed senses had grasped the fact.

The steel hand of the Lieutenant, trained to a scientific use of muscle, was far different from the flabby hold of the coachman, communicating his own terror to the beasts. The mules bent their heads curiously backward as though thunderstruck at the new power that had apparently dropped from the heavens to stay their maddened flight. The steady, unbroken pull on the lines, however, showed them that the sudden curb was permanent. Morton, still maintaining his iron grip, called out a quick, reassuring command to halt. The mules hesitated, but their terror was too deep-seated for so easy a conquest.

The Lieutenant darted a swift glance down the street. The pavement was deserted and the field before them was clear of embarrassing obstacles. Barring the unforeseen, he realized that he was master of the situation: that the wild

dash of the animals had been too furious to be long maintained with a steady grip behind them. He ventured to take a spasmodic thought of himself and passenger. The suggestion of the latter brought his head around so sharply that he almost lost the lines. The silence behind him might be either reassuring or the reverse. Had the girl fainted—if so, had it been from fright or from physical injury?

His first glance showed him, however, that she was complete mistress of her senses, and that her silence was due to no more serious cause than a feminine agitation as to the condition of her hat. With the aid of a diminutive hand-glass, she was taking advantage of the first moment of steadiness to rearrange the tilted bower of straw and ribbons, which reposed on the rumpled masses of her red-gold hair—seeming almost Titian in the rays of the sun.

Having successfully curbed the outlet of his emotions, so far as words could provide an outlet, in spite of the varying provocations of the past five minutes, Lieutenant Morton may be pardoned for the sentence which his lips slowly opened to utter. But he progressed no farther than the first three words.

"Well, I'll be—!" he ejaculated.

"Don't, Ronald! It isn't polite to swear in the presence of a lady!" said a laughing voice under the flattened head-gear. "Besides, if this were *your* only decent hat, and your milliner two thousand miles away, you might be anxious for its safety, too!"

"Virginia Vare!" gasped Morton, and this time he did drop one of the lines. His frantic dash in its rescue served the double purpose of blunting the shock of the recognition and giving him a brief chance to recover his whirling faculties.

"Don't understand by that, Ronald, that I do not appreciate the service you have rendered me!" The girl leaned forward abruptly and gripped the edge of his seat. He saw that her eyes were dimmed with a moisture, which she made no effort to hide. Morton found a sudden necessity to busy himself with the lines. Virginia Vare in Panama! So the cynical gossip of Carlton was right!

"Are you glad to see me—Ronald?" The girl's voice dropped softly and suggestively at his Christian name.

"Do you think I ought to be?" asked Morton bluntly. The pace of the mules had now dropped to an almost decorous gallop. But the Lieutenant made no effort to check it farther.

The girl flashed a sudden glance at his averted face.

"Surely you have not so soon forgotten our last meeting?" Morton queried, staring ahead.

The girl was silent.

"Or perhaps you have had so many others like it that it has become—shall we say—ancient history?" There was more than a hint of bitterness in the Lieutenant's tones.

"You are unkind, Ronald," the girl answered simply.

"Then I apologize," said Morton imperturbably. "A man is always hit harder by such affairs than a woman, I believe."

"Do you not think that I suffered also?"

"You?" There was an emphasis on the pronoun which made the girl wince.

She still gripped the edge of the seat. "Do you remember that it was you who doubted me—never I who doubted you?"

"There was never reason," Morton tugged on the reins with a sullen viciousness which made the team rear back their heads. "I offered you all that a man could give—a spotless name, an unselfish devotion, and a love that was wholly yours. I would have championed you in the face of any obstacle and any war. I was even ready to leave the service of my flag, because I loved your service more. And when I asked you to trust me in return for all this, to give yourself to me as I gave myself to you, you—"

"Refused to answer questions which I had no right to answer," the girl finished for him.

"I was not my own mistress, even as I am not now. You asked of me a frankness which I could not give, because I was bound by a pledge which even you had no right to ask me to break. And your love was so questioning, so suspicious, that it refused to take the woman,

regardless of what she might or might not be. Real love, Morton, asks only love in return."

The Lieutenant turned with a quick-rising flush, almost of anger. The girl met his gaze unflinchingly. The sense of her beauty, intensified by the loosened masses of her disarranged hair, struck him so sharply that his nails dug into the palms of his hands. Some one had once said that Virginia Vare had the seductiveness of Cleopatra and the innocence of Maud Muller; and this homely comparison of an army mess-room described the young lady of the tantalizing extremes with a barbed point that came home to Morton again with an emphasized truth.

"So I did not offer you a real love?" he repeated, and the emotions fighting for utterance made his voice husky and almost unnatural. "Do you recall how I defended your name when it was bandied about Washington; how I almost fought young Claughton when he called you a spy and an informer? Do you recall how the boys in the mess laughed at me for a fool, and how I bore it without a murmur, confident you would vindicate yourself and me? Do you recall that final affair of the Frenchman; De Lesseps, when the gossip that linked you together in the disappearance and recovery of the Atlantic Coast plans, made it imperative for me to have an explanation? And that last night on the Potomac—I can feel the intoxicating thrill of the stars and the waves yet!—do you remember how I pleaded with you for just one word, and how you thought so little of my fealty that you refused even that? And then I left you and Washington and the ashes of the past, and tried to forget! Forget! And now you have come to open the old wound again!"

"Did you ever think that it was because I valued your homage so much, Ronald, instead of so little, that I was silent?" the girl suggested.

Morton turned the mules slowly about, and took the return route in a silence that was almost sullen. They had covered three blocks before he spoke again. Virginia Vare was studying the curious intermingling of Yankee "punch" and Panamanian slothfulness

in the stores along the curb with an expression of bored indifference.

"Can you answer the question now which I asked you on the Potomac?" flashed Morton abruptly.

The girl turned her eyes from a funny little Japanese bazaar, and one might have fancied that she caught her breath as one who received a sudden knife-thrust. But her voice was as steady as though replying to a commonplace observation.

"I regret, Mr. Morton, that I cannot."

"And I can assume that you are in Panama on some such mission as that of the De Lesseps affair?" There was a hard, metallic ring in the man's voice.

"You are at liberty to assume what you please."

"Even to the extent of making war on your own Government?"

"Even to that extent—if you must!"

The eyes of the two again clashed. The thought which had been struggling in Morton's subconsciousness flashed suddenly to the front.

"When did you arrive in Panama?" he queried with a directness that was almost brusque.

"My steamer reached Colon yesterday morning. Why?"

Morton tried to fight back the wave of hot suspicion that turned his eyes into sudden points of steel. So Virginia Vare, the alleged diplomatic spy and adventuress, had been in Panama twenty-four hours! And the robbery of Colonel Pendergrast's safe had occurred almost at once upon her landing!

A sharp voice hailed him from the curb as he glanced mechanically in its direction. The missing cabman was frantically endeavoring to attract his attention. Morton recognized him with an overwhelming sense of relief, and jerked the team to a sharp halt. The girl leaned forward in her seat as he sprang to the ground, her eyes following his figure almost wistfully.

"Is—is this good-by?" she asked in a low tone, as he paused at the step.

Morton hesitated. And then the suspicion her own words had fired, again surged over him, and his hands clenched. "I hope so!" he said pointedly, and quickened his steps.

The girl crouched back almost as

though she had been struck, and sat staring at him with an expression of frank bewilderment, which changed of a sudden to a deep, benumbing terror, like the gleam in the eyes of a cornered deer, as the cab rattled into motion. But it was gone on the instant and Morton didn't see it.

The Lieutenant halted undecidedly on the curb, with the remembrance of his interrupted reply to the summons of Inez Montez holding his steps. Then turning wearily, he beckoned to the cabman watching him from the corner.

"If these are piping times of peace," he growled with a slow and solemn emphasis, "give me war!"

CHAPTER VI

The girl with the arching eye-brows and the vivid red lips, heard the footsteps as she sat at the piano, but did not glance around. A fleeting smile, vanishing almost as swiftly as it appeared, flashed out of the depths of her veiled eyes, but her nimble fingers did not cease their dance over the keys.

Morton came to a pause at the door of the great, wide living-room and took a musing survey of the musician's absorbed pose. With the memory of his meeting with Virginia Vare hot upon him, he was grateful for an interlude, however brief. There was no doubting Inez Montez's charm. In all of his service at the four compass points—service which had given him unusual opportunity for the study of beautiful women—he had never seen a neck and waist like these. And that hair! Morton felt a sudden, hardly controllable desire to plunge his hand through the dark, piled-up masses. It is much to be feared that Morton was an impressionable young man. The Lieutenant's eyes traveled from the jeweled comb to the soft lines of the white lingerie morning gown and thence to the tips of the high-heeled slippers, tapping the floor in unison with the dreamy music. Then the realization of the volcanic femininity concealed under the deceiving exterior, swept over him with warning steadiness, and he advanced across the room with a quick, resolute step. At the girl's side,

he drew his heels together with a sharp click.

"Good morning, Señorita!"

The player's eyes flashed from the key-board to his face.

"Good morning, Mr. Morton!" The music rippled on. "You will find a rocker at your side, I think."

Morton took it with an ill grace.

"If you were as complimentary as usual, Lieutenant, you would say something nice about this waltz!"

Morton bit his lip. "Compliments with you are superfluous, Señorita!"

"Very pretty, but hardly satisfying, Mr. Morton. Perhaps the music is too dreamy for the prosaic, matter-of-fact atmosphere of the morning. —Does this strike your mood better?"

Morton's foot tapped the floor impatiently. "Really, Señorita, you—"

A sharp, abrupt note, and the strains of the *Amoureuse* waltz plunged into a tingling, dashing strain of odd little thrills and quivers, which raced over the instrument like the leaping sparks of a dynamo. It was a merry, mocking melody, suggesting wicked-eyed dancing girls with castanets and flashing ankles—the kind of a melody which fires the blood like champagne and snaps dare-devil fingers at convention. Morton half-rose from his chair. The girl suddenly shifted her position so that her eyes shot a gleam, as mocking as the music, into his face. What in the name of the Heaven, that created woman, was her object? Was she seeking to tantalize him in a fit of caprice? Surely this was not a girl burdened with an agitating message that he had expected to find!

The piano crashed to the swinging, tantalizing refrain again, then ceased.

"You are cold, you Americans! Cold like your ice and sleet! And yet you wonder why you do not write great music!"

"Have you brought me here to discuss music?" Morton returned calmly.

"I am almost minded to send you away without discussing anything!"

Morton rose sharply from his chair and reached toward his hat.

"You have amused me, Señorita, but at the risk of being rude, I must remind you that I did not come to be amused. I bid you good-morning!"

The girl watched him to the door steadily.

"Perhaps, Mr. Morton, you would be more interested in a discussion of the stolen fortification plans of the Canal!"

Morton whirled.

The girl's eyes glinted at the evidence of his confusion.

"I was confident that *that* shot would gain the ear of my cold-blooded Lieutenant!"

"You speak in riddles, Señorita!"

Morton parried. He still stood at the door uncertainly. Was this, then, the reason for the girl's note? He shot a long, shrewd glance across at her lounging figure, obviously delighting in his discomfiture. But it told him nothing.

"Are you afraid to be frank with me, Lieutenant?"

"That depends on whether I am to meet you as a friend or an enemy?"

"You mean—"

"That the tone of your note led me to believe that you could aid me—that you wished to aid me," Morton hazarded boldly. "Am I right?"

The girl's fingers toyed absently with her bracelet. "Aren't we at a disadvantage in this long-distance conversation?"

"Perhaps so," Morton assented, advancing into the room until he could have reached over and touched her shoulder. "Is it to be friends or enemies?"

"Suppose we say that for the present it is a truce?"

The Lieutenant studied the rug at his feet. "Agreed! A flag of truce may mean anything, I believe. You have a message, then, which I should know?"

The Señorita nodded gravely. "What would you say if I should tell you that I knew of the robbery of Colonel Pendergrast's safe before you did?"

"I should not question your statement in the slightest, although I confess that I would marvel."

"And suppose that I added that I could assist you toward the detection of the robber, and the recovery of the stolen documents?"

"I should say that there is no further need for our truce!"

"You are hasty, Lieutenant. You have heard my proposition, but you have not yet heard my price!"

"Your price?"

"You forget that our discussion so far has been rather one-sided. I have yet to hear from you. Has it occurred to you that there might be a condition attached to my information?"

Morton's eyes narrowed. The reckless mood of the music had vanished from the girl's bearing. Her coldness was almost repelling, and yet he fancied that under the change there lurked a taut, barely restrained eagerness, almost of suspense. He suddenly realized that their conversation had taken on something of the aspect of a duel. He stiffened unconsciously, like a man on guard.

"If you have a condition, *Señorita*, suppose you state it bluntly," he suggested. "I presume I have the privilege of either accepting or rejecting it."

The girl winced at his curtness, and then flushed in annoyance as she saw that his steady eyes had surprised the emotion.

"My price, Lieutenant?" She hung on the words musingly. "It is neither a question of dollars nor of ethics. Do I surprise you? If I lead you to the stolen plans, my condition is simply this, that you allow nothing—absolutely nothing, mind you—to interfere with the full discharge of your duty toward the thief!"

Morton gasped, more in bewilderment than in relief. "Don't you think your stipulation is somewhat unnecessary? You forget that I am an officer of the American government, and that the possessor of those plans is an enemy to that government. There would be but one course possible—the punishment of the guilty person as he deserves!"

"And suppose that the masculine pronoun did not apply to the person in question?"

The Lieutenant flushed.

"But surely I am not to war with a woman?"

"On the contrary, with one whom you have reason to know well!"

"Wont you be more explicit, *Señorita*?"

"With pleasure!" Almost unconsciously an acid tone had crept into the girl's voice. "Surely, Miss Virginia Vare of Washington is no stranger to Lieutenant Ronald Morton!"

A tense silence fell between the two. The girl suddenly laughed, and the laugh stung Morton like a blow. He rose from his seat, and paced across the room, the girl watching him with the laugh still in her eyes. His own suspicions, for the moment forgotten, swept over him again with redoubled force at the new fuel, and he fought in vain to stifle them.

"You are absurd, *Señorita*," he temporized. "How do you know that Miss Vare is even in Panama?"

"Her steamer arrived at Colon yesterday morning!"

"But even so, what—"

"You have not yet agreed to my conditions, Mr. Morton!"

"I repeat that I fail to see the necessity of a condition," Morton said wearily. "However, if you require it, I give you my word that I shall not fail in my duty! Does that satisfy you? And now, *Señorita*, I must insist that you supply me with the facts at which you are hinting—if you have them!"

"All in due course! Lieutenant, you are overly impulsive!"

"Let us have an end of words, *Señorita*!"

An angry flush swept the girl's face. "So your allegiance to the charming government spy is unbroken, Lieutenant? Oh, that wounds, does it? I have heard that Virginia Vare had trailed your heart in the dust, that—"

"*Señorita*! You are making a serious situation into a farce." Morton bent low over the girl's chair, so low that the suppressed anger of his gaze held her like a magnet.

"So you want proof? Well, you shall have it! Find Virginia Vare and tell her—"

"Yes?"

"Tell her that the Blue Fan is broken!"

"What absurdity is that?"

"You obey my instructions, and see. I rather imagine you will find it something of a tragedy!"

The word was caught up in a sneering voice at the Lieutenant's shoulder. As Morton whirled, a slight, swarthy young man, with a thin, black mustache, waxed to two absurd points, stepped from an adjoining door.

"Oho! So our love making has become tragedy, has it?"

Morton stared, with the flush on his face deepening. The newcomer swung into the room, with a suggestion of authority which under other circumstances might have been amusing.

"Well met, Lieutenant. I may say that I called at the hotel for you not an hour ago—and I find that you have the audacity to present yourself at this house in my absence!"

"Are you crazy, Enrico?" gasped the girl.

"Evidently your brother is suffering from an hallucination, Señorita!" Morton said drily, heartily wishing himself well away from the house, and ready to curse himself for a fool that he had ever entered it. He caught up his hat cautiously and edged toward the door.

Enrico took a swift step toward him, and before Morton realized his intention, seized him by the shoulders.

"So you would escape, eh? I expected as much from a man of your stamp. A blackguard is always a coward!"

Morton's hand shot out and jerked the other's grip away so roughly that the Panamanian barely saved himself from sprawling ignominiously on the floor. Inez rose with a stifled shriek.

"Now, little one," said Morton grimly. "If you will kindly explain what particular form of hallucination is buzzing through that overwrought brain of yours, for your sister's sake, I will try to clear away the cobwebs. But I warn you now that I have been tried to the limit already!"

Enrico staggered back against a chair, breathing heavily.

"Explanations! Explanations! So you would explain rather than fight! Do you think that you can deceive me, Enrico Montez, when I know how you have bandied my sister's name about Panama? My father is too old to champion her rights, but I, her brother, will be her protector. So you would explain? Bah, you will fight me, Mr. Morton, or I will make your name a by-word!"

"Fight you?" Morton repeated blankly. "Why, you little insignificant bantam, are you so ridiculous as to mean a duel?"

"Bantam! An insignificant bantam,

am I? Hear that! We shall see, Mr. Morton! You shall feel the bantam's claws, you pig of an American!"

Before Morton, thunderstruck at the outburst, could appreciate or prevent the Panamanian's next action, the situation rushed to an abrupt climax. Enrico's long, sinewy fingers suddenly darted toward his face, and before the Lieutenant could turn his head, they closed about his nose with a grip that brought a quick flush of pain to his cheeks. The next instant, Morton's fist shot out spitefully and took his assailant squarely under his chin. Enrico went down like a log.

Inez sprang from her chair, and rushed to his side. But the young man raised himself limply to his elbow.

"Back! I tell you—back! This an affair for men, not for women! Now will you fight, you American, or shall I pull your nose again?"

"Fight?" Morton grated. "Yes, I'll fight you, if they don't put you in an asylum first!"

The girl stared from one to the other with ashen face, and heaving breast.

The consciousness of what he had done and what it meant, for the first time struck Morton with its full force. Duelling in Panama was by no means obsolete, although technically prohibited by a pigeon-holed law. But for an American officer to allow himself to be embroiled in a petty quarrel! The muddle could not well be worse. Morton suddenly realized that he had put his foot into it with a vengeance.

"What have you done, Enrico? Oh, what have you done?" the girl cried.

Young Montez picked himself up from the floor, unsteadily.

"My second will see you during the day, Mr. Morton!"

A curious steadiness, almost of dignity, had succeeded his hysterical rage. Morton nodded his head curtly.

"As you will," he said indifferently. "I bid you good-morning, Señorita—a *very* good-morning!"

And he strode out of the room and out of the house.

At the edge of the lawn, he glanced back uncertainly. Was it a fantastic nightmare that he had just passed through?

He shook his head gloomily. "I imagine that if old Donaldson were here, he would say that I had made several kinds of a dunce of myself!"

CHAPTER VII

At almost the same hour, at the opposite end of the yawning city of Panama, the cunning of a master hand was adding another twist to the curious tangle of events dating from the robbery of Colonel Pendergrast's safe.

The hands of Dr. Blake's watch hovered on the verge of eleven and he had just straightened from another examination of the log-like form of the servant, José—an examination which showed that the man was still senseless to the world—when an orderly rapped softly on the door.

"You are wanted at the telephone, sir."

The surgeon's brow contracted as he glanced at the still form on the bed.

"Tell the party that it is quite impossible for me to come."

The orderly hesitated. "I beg pardon, sir, but the message is from the Chief's office and says that the Colonel desires you at the wire at once!"

"Why didn't you say so before?" the doctor snapped. His patience had been sorely tried by the morning vigil to which he had been so autocratically assigned. And doubtless this was another order on the same subject. He glanced again at his scarcely breathing patient, and swung from the room with a scowl which made his assistants shrug their shoulders curiously. When Dr. Blake was in a bad humor, the surrounding atmosphere was charged with electricity.

The doctor called a quick, curt answer into the telephone and tapped his foot impatiently at the silence that greeted him. He jogged the hook up and down a half-dozen times with results no better, and finally in desperation he hung back the receiver savagely, strode to the door, and then grudgingly admitting the peevishness of his action, returned to the instrument.

"Give me Colonel Pendergrast's office," he requested when he gained the belated ear of central.

Another moment of irritating delay, and then the surgeon caught the brisk tones of the Chief.

"This is Dr. Blake, Colonel. I received your message, but there has been some trouble on the line."

"My message?" snapped the Colonel. "What on earth are you talking about, man?"

"Why, the telephone communication that came from your office not ten minutes ago!" the surgeon retorted, his peevishness returning.

"The telephone here has not been used for the past half-hour, Dr. Blake!"

There was a grimness in the sharp tones at the other end of the wire, which the surgeon didn't pause to analyze. A sudden vision of his unguarded patient and the peremptory orders concerning his espionage flashed before his bewildered senses. There was a confused murmur from the receiver in his hand. Evidently Colonel Pendergrast was still speaking, but the doctor cut off the connection without apology or explanation and raced back into the corridor. He caromed against a nurse outside, but his dash was not checked. At the end of the hall, his fingers closed feverishly around the knob of the door leading to the unconscious José. It turned—but the door refused to open.

For an instant, Dr. Blake stood motionless, his face gone abruptly white. Then an ugly glint flashed into his eyes, and he put an angry shoulder against the resisting panels. The door yielded a fraction of an inch. It was not locked, but it was evident that a heavy body was holding it.

The doctor jerked his hand toward one of his assistants lounging down the corridor, but the combined efforts of the two were powerless to force an entrance. Dr. Blake dragged forward a chair and sprang to its seat, and then to its back, gripping the edge of the door. Heedless of broken glass, he raised a clenched fist and shattered the transom, jerking back the curtain inside.

One glance into the room was sufficient to confirm his worst fears. The bed on which the senseless servant had been reposing was empty. José had disappeared!

A window at the side was wide open,

the dresser in the corner of the apartment had been dragged against the door, and in its turn reinforced by the table.

Dr. Blake dropped back into the corridor. Now that he was facing a definite problem, all of his coolness and self-possession returned. He was again the crisply moving hospital superintendent.

The room was a first-floor apartment, and the window was not above six feet from the ground. Even as he darted out into the broad, sweeping grounds and around the corner of the building, Blake was uncomfortably aware that the spiriting away of his patient was almost absurdly easy, if the abductors had been familiar enough with the situation to select the psychological moment for their attempt.

An instant's examination of the ground beneath the open window was enough to show that a vehicle had been drawn up for some moments, judging from the depth and extent of the tracks in the soft earth. Three men could easily have managed the affair, allowing two for the inside work and one on guard in the wagon or carriage below.

As the surgeon turned from his hasty inspection of the ground, a rapidly driven carriage clattered into the yard and Colonel Pendergrast sprang briskly to the ground.

"So your man has escaped, doctor?" he growled.

"I should say that he has been abducted, sir," corrected the surgeon.

"We wont split words. Had the fellow shown any signs of consciousness?"

"Not the slightest. And unless my experience is hopelessly at fault, he will be dead to the world for another twenty-four hours; a sort of cataleptic trance, I should say."

The Colonel paced up and down the driveway with his hands clenched behind his back, for all the world like a caged animal chafing at the bars.

"A bad business, Blake, a *very* bad business!"

The surgeon drew himself stiffly erect. "Of course, I realize, sir, that I am responsible."

"My dear man how does that help matters? You are the victim of a clever plot, just as the rest of us have been—a devilishly clever plot!" The Colonel

stamped up the stairs. "You are a surgeon, Blake, not a detective. And a detective is what I want now."

"But surely, sir, it ought not to be difficult to trace a man in José's condition."

Colonel Pendergrast glared back from the door. "If that were the case, do you suppose anyone would have taken the trouble to make away with him? Bah!" he snorted angrily, and disappeared into the building, leaving a very much rumpled medical gentleman staring after him.

It was at this moment that Donaldson and Morton swung through the hospital gate. Blake greeted them with a scowl.

"If you want to fight, you have come to the right quarter!" he snapped.

"Everybody wants to fight this morning," said Morton pensively. "What's *your* grievance, Blake?"

The doctor jerked out a sudden account of the morning's episode, but his terse summary was interrupted by the sound of wheels again in the driveway. As the trio stared toward the gate a cab rattled up to the veranda.

"Now, who's coming?" growled Donaldson.

"Rushing business!" rejoined Blake, poised at the top of the steps.

Morton said nothing. He had caught a side view of the occupant of the cab, and recognized with a catch of his breath the somewhat bored features of Virginia Vare.

The girl sprang nimbly from the seat, and tripped up the steps as Blake doffed his hat and advanced to meet her. Morton kept his position in the background. If the girl had caught sight of him, she gave no evidence of the fact.

"Is this Dr. Blake?" she questioned.

The surgeon gravely inclined his head. "At your service!" He was still young enough to appreciate a pretty woman.

"My name is Vare," the girl continued directly, "Virginia Vare of Washington."

Morton heard Donaldson smother a sudden exclamation, and felt his friend's eyes sweeping his face with a shrewd, questioning glance. Plainly the name meant nothing to Blake, however.

"And what may I do for you, Miss

Vare?" the surgeon asked with more than a suspicion of gallantry.

The girl hesitated. "I am come on a rather curious mission, doctor. I am told that you have a patient here, who has been closely associated with our family for more than a generation. Although a servant, we have always had a real affection for him. When I was a child, he saved my life at the cost of serious injury to himself and you can understand that if he is ill, it would be a privilege for me to render him any assistance that might be in my power."

"And what is his name, Miss Vare?"

"We always called him—José!"

"José!" repeated the surgeon in an amazement which brought the girl's eyes flashing questioningly to his face.

"Is there anything curious in the name, doctor?"

"Not in the name perhaps, but certainly in the man!" Blake rejoined drily. He glanced uncertainly at Morton and Donaldson, and the girl following his glance, allowed a flush to flash into her cheeks as she caught sight of the lieutenant. The latter raised his hat and stepped forward.

"May I intrude, Miss Vare, to the extent of asking who directed you to the hospital?"

"Really there seems to be a vast amount of mystery centered around a humble, colored servant!" the girl retorted with a laugh. "But I am only too glad to answer your question, Lieutenant. I am indebted for my information to Colonel Pendergrast."

"Indeed!" The exclamation came with a hint of relief from the doctor. "Then I can see no harm in telling you, Miss Vare that José is no longer here."

The girl's gaze swept the trio of faces above her in bewilderment.

"I don't understand. Colonel Pendergrast—"

"Oh, the Colonel was correct enough. As a matter of fact, you are just about an hour too late. José has been stolen!"

"Stolen?"

"Kidnaped—spirited away!" jerked out Morton, searching her face. Was it fancy or did he detect a gleam of apprehension in the abruptly lowered eyes? The girl raised her hand to her cab-man.

"I fear that in my thoughtlessness, I have occupied a great deal more of your time than I had a right to ask. Perhaps some day—"

"Yes?" queried Blake, raising his eyebrows at her sudden evidences of hurry.

"Perhaps I can thank you more fittingly!" Miss Vare finished lamely. As the girl settled into her seat, Morton surrendering to an abrupt impulse, circled nimbly around Donaldson's elbow and down the steps in her wake.

CHAPTER VIII

"Miss Vare, will you give me a lift?"

The question was put in a tone so low that the two men on the veranda failed to catch it. For a second the girl returned his impulsive glance with a barely perceptible contracting of her eyebrows. Morton guessed grimly that she was not pleased. He had expected as much. But he knew he had put his request in such a manner that she could not refuse.

The girl yielded with a smiling grace. She drew quickly over to the end of the seat and motioned him to spring in beside her, with an assumption of indifference which Morton could not help admiring. He could divine readily enough that he had seriously embarrassed her plans. From the carriage he waved a hand to Donaldson. The latter was scowling savagely down at him, and the surgeon wore an expression of bewilderment as though he were aware that there was an undercurrent in the whole situation he had failed to master.

"Where shall I set you down, Ronald—or do I take a liberty in the Christian name?" the girl queried in a curiously matter-of-fact tone as the cab rattled through the hospital gate.

The lieutenant shrugged. "Could you leave me at the Tivoli? Of course, you are aware that my request was only a blind?" he continued boldly.

"Not being utterly dense, I was aware that was the fact—yes. What would you have?"

Morton digested her return boldness for a moment in silence.

"Why did you give that fabrication about José?" he questioned bluntly.

"Fabrication? That is not a nice word, Ronald!"

"The truth is not always nice. But I thought I had sugar-coated my phrase sufficiently."

"As a matter of fact, it happens that my story was correct," the girl said quietly.

"The man was a servant of your family?" There was frank incredulity in Morton's tones.

"Yes."

"And what else?"

The girl's eyes narrowed in her turn. "I am afraid I don't catch your meaning."

"And yet you reminded me that you were not—dense. Shall I put my question more plainly?"

"Your suggestion might almost be a dare?"

"It is!"

"Then let us use naked blades!"

"As you will. José may have been your servant, but not in the sense you conveyed. He was your—spy!"

Virginia Vare laughed openly.

"You do not credit me with an excessive amount of intelligence, I fear."

"Quite the contrary. I know more of the fellow's mettle than you may think. There are even dogs that will die in their master's service!"

The girl straightened suddenly at the simile, and for a brief instant, Morton thought that he could detect again the fitting glance of apprehension in her eyes.

"Do you infer that José is dead?"

"Would it be so unfortunate for you if he were?" the lieutenant responded almost brutally. "Dead men tell no tales!"

"Lieutenant, you are insulting!"

"A certain tale José might tell in connection with the robbery of Colonel Pendergrast's safe might be rather—shall we say awkward?" continued Morton imperturbably.

"Are you so absurd that you accuse me of—that?"

Morton whirled in triumph. "So you know of that little affair, do you? Only the United States Government and the thieves are acquainted with that episode, Miss Vare!"

The girl received the statement with-

out a tremor. "Really, lieutenant, I congratulate you! So you fancy that I have trapped myself, do you?"

Morton made no answer. His gray eyes remained fixed in a steady, questioning, almost relentless survey of her face. He had plunged his knife home. He was watching its effect with the cold precision of the surgeon.

Then swift as the change of a summer sky, the girl's attitude veered. Her eyes filled with a soft, appealing moisture as she raised them to the unwavering gaze before her.

"Why do you always doubt me, Ronald? Once you said that you loved me. Can the girl that inspired such affection be as unworthy as you would think?"

Morton's hands clinched. "I asked you for the truth once, and you refused it. Are you going to refuse it again? I asked you then as a lover. I ask you now as an officer of the United States Government!"

"Is the lover then—gone?"

"You have no need to ask that!" Morton grated. "It is because I loved you—loved you as a man only loves once—and it is because I love you now that I demand that you either end or admit these suspicions. Let's have done with these pretty phrases. One word, Virginia, and I swear I will accept it in the face of Hades. Can you give me that word?"

The girl's glance still rested on his face, even in the moment of silence in which she weighed his sentence.

"You said, Ronald, that the robbery was known only to the government and—the thieves. If I am not of the one—"

"Yes?" breathed Morton, and then in his next thought, the remembrance of the parting message of Inez Montez flashed to him, and he flung it in her teeth. "What of the Blue Fan, Virginia, the *broken* Blue Fan?"

The girl fell back against the cushions, swaying like a man with an unexpected bullet in his breast. The wistful eagerness was blotted from her eyes under the stare of a great and overpowering terror. Morton saw that she was gasping as though fighting for breath. And then the carriage halted abruptly and he saw that they were at the steps of the hotel.

"Shall I get water—help?" he questioned swiftly, bending over her, his own amazement forgotten at the sight of the blanched face before him. The girl motioned him away with a limp hand.

"Leave me!" And then as he hesitated, she raised her voice almost hysterically. "Water! Smelling salts! A nurse! Yes, that is what I need! Ha! Ha!" She straightened abruptly. "Oh, I was only too pleased to offer you the ride, Lieutenant! Good morning, Mr. Morton!"

Morton sprang to the ground, still staring woodenly at the girl above him. The driver pulled sharply on his reins and his team clattered down the hill. Virginia Vare had again fallen weakly back against the cushions.

The lieutenant turned in a daze and ascended the steps. He dug his hands savagely into his pockets. The Blue Fan? What devilish purpose did the words conceal? Once before he had seen a hopeless look of terror like that reflected in the features of Virginia Vare. It was in the face of a prisoner stationed before a firing squad—a debonair soldier of fortune mocking at man and God until he faced the blue barrels leveled at his breast, and then, in the moment before eternity, collapsing like a wilted rag.

Morton's hand was on the knob of the hotel door when a slight, wiry, olive-skinned man, lounging in a rocker, rose languidly to his feet and touched him on the shoulder.

"Lieutenant Morton, I believe?"

"And what if it is?" Morton snapped.

The man's lips parted in a grin that showed two rows of white teeth.

"Only that I am a friend of Señor Enrico Montez."

"Then I am sorry for you!"

"You insult me, Lieutenant!"

"You are easily insulted, my friend. However, I fear you must excuse me, I am in something of a hurry."

"Excuse you! Are you so dense as not to know why I am here?"

There was a taunt in the words which brought the lieutenant's thoughts back sharply to the morning's episode. He had forgotten the duel.

"You don't mean to say that you take

young Montez's talk of fighting seriously, Señor!" he gasped.

"Unfortunately for you—yes. However, I am authorized to say that my friend will accept a written apology—if made at once!"

"Will a typewritten one do?" Morton asked anxiously.

The man's eyes contracted.

"Of course, I could sign my name to it," the lieutenant said thoughtfully. "Would Señor Montez pay the stenographer?"

"Is this a joke, Lieutenant?"

"Very much of a one, I assure you. It is really excruciatingly funny, don't you think so? Or perhaps your sense of humor is not so developed as mine?"

The man stamped his feet in typical Central American fashion. "I am serious, Lieutenant. Is it fight or apologize?"

"Are you aware, Señor, that I am known as the best shot in Panama? If I should meet your friend with pistols, I should immediately put a small, round, red hole between his eyes, which I am afraid would sadly spoil his looks as a corpse, and if I should meet him with swords, I should at once make mince meat of his heart, and that, I am afraid would not be a bit pleasant. And it would hurt dreadfully!"

Morton's head turned suddenly at the sound of a footstep behind him, and his eyes lighted as he recognized Donaldson. His voice took on a suddenly curt note as he continued.

"Will the Señor give me three minutes with my friend?"

"You will return?"

"No, but he will, and if you and Montez must have a duel, you shall have it!"

"Three minutes!" the man repeated suspiciously.

"Oh, I'm not going to run away. I would give you my watch to hold if I wasn't afraid of it!"

The other's eyes glistened angrily, but Morton swung away without a backward glance.

Donaldson received him in a suspicious silence. Morton grinned as he noted the attitude.

"Oh, Miss Vare, didn't run away with my heart, old man!"

"But she has run away with your common sense. As a friend, Morton, I am going to lock you into your room and keep the key.

"Too late, Donaldson!"

"You don't mean—"

"For Heaven's sake, get that girl off your mind, man! I am in real trouble, Donaldson, and—"

"What trouble can you be in that is not mixed up with a petticoat?"

"Cut it, Don! Can't you harp on any other subject but that? I've got to fight a duel, old chap, and I want you for a second!"

Donaldson's open-mouthed stare of astonishment might have been ludicrous under other circumstances. But Morton was in no mood to appreciate the fact.

"It's that little cad of a Montez, Donaldson—that spit-fire of an Enrico. I'll explain the details to you later. He accused me of doing all sorts of absurd things to his sister, and ended by pulling my nose."

"Pulling your nose!"

"Look closely, and you may observe that it is somewhat out of joint. I knocked him down, of course, and the fool challenged me. His man is here now—that chap over there with a complexion like a ripe olive."

Donaldson grew suddenly serious. "Do you know what this means to you, Mort? You'll lose your commission, sure, if it reaches the Old Man's ears, and you know as well as I do that you can't keep it quiet. A duel! You might as well resign and be done with it."

Morton held out his hand impulsively. "Forgive me, old chap, for trying to drag you into it. I never thought of that end of it. Of course, as my second, you would be pulled through the grill with me. Forget it, Don!"

In three steps, Donaldson caught the other's shoulders.

"Is that Montez's second there by the steps?"

"Yes—why?"

"Well, you beat it into the smoking-room while I pow-wow with him!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm your second, am I not? And as long as you've got to fight, I suppose it's my duty to see that you get fair play!"

"Come back here, Donaldson. You're going to keep out of it!"

"Hush, little one!" Donaldson retorted. "Mamma will be back with the catnip tea directly!"

Morton spent a sullen quarter of an hour in the smoking-room, and savagely consigned three badly chewed cigarets to the ash tray before Donaldson's broad shoulders appeared in the doorway.

"Now, don't get excited!" the latter said, almost grimly, as he lighted his cigaret in his turn. "It is all fixed."

He smoked for a couple of moments musingly.

"Fixed?" growled Morton impatiently. "How?"

"Six o'clock to-night, in the back garden of the old Amador house. It's the most convenient and secluded spot for the ceremony we could find."

Morton gloomily crossed his legs.

"And I say, old man, I took the liberty of picking swords. The beggar might have the luck to wing you if I had said pistols, and with swords, you can carve off the tip of an ear or nose and end it!"

Morton scowled by way of answer.

Donaldson carefully dusted off the ashes of his cigaret.

"Why is Montez so anxious to fight?"

"Some fancied grievance about his sister, I told you."

"His sister—bosh! His only regard for her is centered in her ability to pay his debts. There is something else back of it all, Mort."

"What's buzzing in your cranium now?"

Donaldson shook his head doggedly. "Those chaps are up to mischief, Mort, and you're going to be the goat! Mark that down in red ink!"

"Well, have a drink with the goat then!" said Morton rising to his feet.

CHAPTER IX

Morton had often boasted that he had eliminated nerves when he donned his lieutenant's stars, and those who had seen his steady eye and muscles in the fever-grilling days on the Cuban coast and had heard his infectious laugh

when his men bunked supperless on the nerve-racking hikes in the Philippine swamps, were prepared to believe him. But it was a decidedly irritable Morton that counted the hours of the afternoon following the rapid-fire series of events that have been narrated.

The lieutenant paced the floor of Donaldson's room and smoked feverishly and persistently and glowered sullenly at the carpet until the latter rose in disgust and literally forced him under an ice-cold shower-bath. The deluge did the lieutenant good. He even rubbed down with a slowly returning smile, but when he had dressed and faced again the period of wearisome inactivity, he returned to his former restlessness.

"For Heaven's sake, Mort, go out and take a gallop!" snapped Donaldson. "One would think that you had never fought a duel before."

"I haven't! But that isn't what bothers me."

"Then what is it?"

Morton perched himself on a corner of the table, dislodging a couple of books which he made no effort to pick up.

"Oh, you wouldn't understand it, if I told you about it!"

"Not if it has to deal with that peculiar form of moon-madness which you call love," flung back Donaldson.

Morton shoved another book to the floor as he gained a firmer position. "Rot!" he ejaculated.

"You have described it exactly!" said Donaldson gloomily. "I had an instinctive feeling that when that girl hit Panamá, you would go to pieces. But I thought you were too much of a veteran, Mort, to be bowled over this way. And the worst of it is, she isn't worth it!"

"If you value my friendship, Don, keep those sentiments to yourself!"

"All right, fair one!" said Donaldson obligingly. "It's not my funeral, I know, but it seems so much like one of the family that I couldn't help butting in. The far-away smile on that cherub countenance of yours when you climbed into her cab this morning was enough to make a strong man weep. Oh, I'm not lecturing you, Morton! I'm merely indulging in a monologue! I

thought Inez Montez had you hypnotized, but that was only a false alarm compared to the maid of mystery from Washington. But then you always did prefer blondes, didn't you, Ronald?"

Morton's fingers closed about the last book on the table, and he meditatively measured the distance between himself and Donaldson's head. Instead, he slid slowly to the floor and fumbled for his hat in the corner where he had kicked it.

"Are you going to take that gallop, Honey Boy?"

"The devil!" snarled Morton with his hand on the knob.

"Well, I hope you gallop off that charming mood of yours."

Morton swung into the hall without answer.

"Don't forget that our little tea party is scheduled for six o'clock—and you are the guest of honor! I am willing to be your second, but I swear I won't be your understudy!"

Donaldson heard Morton fling down the hall, with an expression which belied the levity of his words.

"I am half-tempted to follow the boy," he muttered. "If half of what I hear of young Montez's sword-arm is true, Mort will need every ounce of his strength. I'm afraid he's made something of an ass of himself, but I don't care to see him made mince-meat of into the bargain!"

Under the spur of the suggestion, Donaldson was at the threshold when the jangle of the telephone sent him scurrying back. The first words over the wire swerved his thoughts sharply into another channel.

"Is that you, Shanton?" he called, knitting his brow as he recognized the tones. "What's up? Morton? No, he's just left. I'm afraid it's too late to catch him. Can I come down? Y-e-s, but why don't you come up? I'm here alone. Good! I'll wait for you."

The tall, broad-shouldered figure of the chief-of-police appeared in the doorway five minutes later. As Donaldson gazed up into the cheerily grinning features, crowning the six feet, two inches of solidly knit muscles, and felt the firm, vigorous clasp of the hand, which in years gone by had won the bronco-buster championship of Colo-

rado, the magnetism of the man smoothed away almost unconsciously the wrinkles that were furrowing his brow.

Shanton dropped into a chair and stated his mission with the crisp directness characteristic of the man.

"Our program of mysteries has added another vanishing act. This time it is our friend, Frank Oliver!"

Donaldson gave an emphatic whistle of amazement, but as he started to speak, Shanton waved him to silence. For a moment the police chief sat studying him shrewdly.

"The Colonel tells me that he has detailed you and Morton on the affair of the safe robbery. Before I go farther, don't you think it about time that we joined forces?"

"Joined forces?"

"You have information which will be of use to me, and I fancy that I have information which will be interesting to you. Shall we unite?"

Donaldson recalled whimsically the slight progress which Morton and he had made in the rôle of detectives, threatening to be still slighter with the duel of the evening in view. "I am afraid you overestimate the service we could render you."

"If you can answer one question, I will be satisfied," Shanton bit off the end of a cigar and chewed it musingly. "I will give you my story in a moment. First I want to put my question. Who and what is Miss Virginia Vare of Washington?"

Donaldson grinned. "I would be under obligations if you could tell me!"

"Do you mean that you can't answer—or won't answer?"

"Really, old man, I've never met the young lady," Donaldson grew serious. "Hang it all, Shanton, what are you driving at? I've been tormenting myself for the past three hours with Miss Vare—what I don't know of her." He hesitated. "Is she concerned with Oliver's disappearance?"

Shanton let the question pass. "But I understood that Morton—"

"That's just it! Morton was in a fair way to make a fool of himself over the girl last winter and, er—"

"Is trying to do the same thing again, eh?" Shanton finished.

"You don't have to say 'trying,'" said Donaldson gloomily.

Shanton suddenly extended a crumpled sheet of note-paper, exhaling a faint, elusive suggestion of violet perfume. "Read it!" he said crisply.

Have finished negotiations with O. B. satisfactory. Deliver documents per arrangement when I reach Panama on the twenty-seventh. Have yacht in readiness to sail on twenty-eighth.

VIRGINIA VARE.

The two men gazed at each other in a thoughtful silence as Donaldson toyed absently with the violet-scented paper—Donaldson in a frank amazement, through which there was beginning to struggle a sudden gleam of apprehension, and Shanton in a coldly critical mood, dissecting every flicker of emotion in the other's face. Donaldson was the first to speak.

"This note was addressed to—Morton?" His voice was husky with the utter bewilderment of the numbing suggestion that had come to him.

"Morton?" Shanton's eyes opened wide in their turn. "Don't be absurd, man. The communication was directed to Oliver."

Donaldson breathed a sigh of relief and sank back into his chair.

"Go easy on those sudden alarms, please! If you had been dancing on the edge of a volcano as I have been ever since Virginia Vare's skirts fluttered on the horizon, your nerves would be as badly frazzled as mine!"

Shanton chuckled. "I may as well give you a connected story, Donaldson. It's not a long one. Oliver took care to hide his trail well enough for that. Of course, you will hardly be surprised after Morton's encounter with the man last night, when I tell you that I have had a weather eye on him for a week. It was about an hour after lunch to-day when he appeared in the hotel office in a hurry, paid his score, and ordered his baggage sent to the dépôt. He followed with a kit bag barely in time to catch the Isthmian train for Colon. My man scrambled into a seat across the aisle just as the engine pulled out. He's clever—Williams, you know—but Oliver is cleverer. The train was leaving Pedro Miguel when he rose from his

seat and sauntered toward the door. Williams saw that his bag was still in the rack and waited for him to return. When ten minutes failed to bring him, he started on a search of the train. He went through the cars twice before he convinced himself that his man was gone. Oliver had evidently jumped from the steps and taken a chance on a header in the jungle, leaving his bag behind him."

"And the note was in it?" queried Donaldson.

"To be exact, in the pocket of a smoking jacket. I went through the clothes on the bare chance of unearthing a clue, and the unexpected happened." Shanton rose to his feet. "I'll confess the whole thing is a Chinese puzzle to me, old man. If Oliver is beating it back to the city on foot, why did he take the train for the other side of the Isthmus? What could he gain? Of course, it's out of the question that he's walking to the Atlantic."

"Are you keeping a watch on the girl?" jerked out Donaldson drily.

"We are shadowing her as closely as though she had a fortune in diamonds on her clothes and a dozen sneak thieves, gentlemanly and otherwise, at her shoulders!"

"There is no question that this note refers to the Canal plans?"

"What else *could* it refer to?" retorted Shanton irritably.

Donaldson took a turn across the room and back. "Why don't you arrest the young lady? That would at least bring Mort up with a jerk!" he muttered to himself.

"For the simple reason that we would probably catch one bird empty-handed and the others—" Shanton snapped his fingers suggestively.

"I rather fancy that we had the key to the whole puzzle in our fingers and let it slip through when we lost José," said Donaldson gloomily. "Have you found any trace of the dark-skinned gentleman?"

Shanton shook his head. "I don't know whether you are aware of the fact that it is almost as difficult to find a fugitive in Panama as in Chinatown—provided, of course, he has friends who wish him kept out of sight. Panama

deals in revolutions as Dresden deals in china—and every specialist in revolutions has his own private storm-cellar where he can make himself and his friends comfortable if the dynamite fails to go off at the right time or the other fellow finds a few more guns than he has. A storm-cellar of the right kind is a handy thing to have, Donaldson, and I would not be surprised if the gentlemen who kidnaped José had one already rented and provisioned for an emergency. If we find the Colonel's interesting servant, it will be when his usefulness is gone! Rather depressing, eh?" Shanton's voice took on a crisper note as he turned to the door. "But the man higher up can't skulk in a storm-cellar. He'll have to leave Panama—and leave in a hurry—and I would almost defy a mosquito to get out of the country now without my knowing it! Unless he has an airship, he'll have to take a boat, and Mr. Oliver was obliging enough to narrow down even that factor for us."

Shanton's words recalled the last sentence of Virginia Vare's note to Donaldson.

"Have you found the yacht our friends refer to?"

"As there happen to be three anchored in the harbor just now, I can't say that I have. It's merely a mathematical question, however, of trebling my men and watching all of them." Shanton turned to the door. "You remember that this is the twenty-eighth and there are only about eight hours of it left. The problem is not quite so hopeless as it might be. I presume a hurry call would reach you and Morton here—say to-night?"

Donaldson flushed, with the remembrance of the duel suddenly recalled.

"I don't see why not," he evaded. And then he added meaningly, "If we are in a shape to come, we'll respond—on the jump!"

Shanton flashed him a curious glance from the hall. "Something doing on the side?"

Donaldson fumbled awkwardly with a match, a great temptation sweeping him to make a clean breast of it all before Morton's dare-deviltry made it worse. And then the golden moment passed.

"Why, no," he hesitated at last. "Certainly not. How absurd!"

CHAPTER X

Donaldson's watch showed that it lacked a half-hour of six when he and Morton stepped into a carriage at the hotel with curt instructions to the driver to take them to the once palatial residence on the edge of the city, known as the old Amador mansion.

Morton's restless mood had vanished. In fact, he was even disposed to be jovial as the carriage clattered onto the cobblestones of the city. With the approach of an emergency, he was again the steady-tempered, resolute-eyed officer, who had owed his life on a score of occasions to his coolness and quickness of action. Donaldson, on the other hand, was showing unmistakable signs of depression, and replied to Morton's raillery in preoccupied monosyllables. On the floor at their feet, reposed a long, slender bundle which would have revealed two very finely tempered, brightly polished swords to the curious gaze had it been opened. But its bearers took good care that it was securely fastened.

Morton cut short a trivial item of gossip to ask suddenly—"We're not supposed to furnish a surgeon, are we?"

Donaldson shook his head. "Montez's second agreed to attend to that interesting detail."

"Glad of it. The only medical gentleman that I know on this edge of nowhere is Blake, and under the circumstances, it would have been devilish embarrassing to have asked his attendance." Morton relapsed into silence, to break it a moment later, with the query—"I say, old chap, wont you brace up and give me some points on this little ceremony? I feel as strange as a chap that has been asked to be best man at a wedding for the first time. What am I supposed to do?"

"Look pleasant and take what's coming!" growled Donaldson.

"You don't say! And suppose that is a nice, clean thrust through my pitty-pattying heart—what?"

"For Heaven's sake, be serious, Mort.

I have an uncomfortable premonition that you will find it serious enough before we are out of it!"

"Don't croak, Don! You're as bad as Poe's Raven. A nice second, you are. You ought to be putting in your time patting me on the back and pressing a drink on me. Oh, you needn't try to remedy it now. I don't take anything, thank you, when I have business to attend to!"

Donaldson aroused himself. "You'll find me true-blue, old man, when you need me!"

Morton reached over and silently pressed his hand. The carriage had left the business quarter and was turning into the outskirts when he spoke again.

"You remember that letter I was scribbling when you called for me, Don? I left it with another one on my table. I'm a rather care-free, harum-scarum chap, and don't pay as much attention to business affairs as I might, but of course you know that dad left me a rather tidy little income, and outside of a sister, who has more than she can ever spend, I haven't a relative in this little old world. Rather queer how Fate deals the cards sometimes, isn't it? If my luck should go back on me to-night, old chap—such things happen sometimes, you know—you may as well know now that I have taken the liberty of transferring my worldly belongings to you. Don't say anything—*please!* It will only make us both nervous, and wont do any good because it's done and it's too late to drive back and undo it. Those letters I mentioned are both addressed. Of course you'll see that they are delivered for me. Not that it matters a whole lot, but I dare say Sis would like the few lines I left, and as for the other—well, the address will tell you probably all you care to know!"

Donaldson stared ahead into the green fringe of trees, with the lines of his mouth strangely tightened. "That's just like you, Mort, and, and—well, I guess you've about bowled me over. There are times when words are as empty as a cocktail glass after the last toast! But you're too good a man to go down before a prig like Montez. *That* wasn't worrying me in the least!" Donaldson turned his eyes abruptly toward his

friend's averted features. "If it's not too much like prying, Mort, is that other letter for, for—"

"Miss Vare?" Morton completed steadily. "Yes. This is no time to mince matters, Don. She is the only woman I ever loved!"

Donaldson gripped his hands hard. Should he give Morton, Shanton's final proofs of the girl's treachery, unworthiness? Clearly the other did not know, could not know the facts. And then the carriage halted at a gray-arched gate and Donaldson sprang to the ground with the impulse smothered. He would never be called upon to post the letter anyway—and Virginia Vare's exposure, if the safe robbery were solved, would be the more staggering if Morton faced it unprepared.

The gate was locked, and as Donaldson swept his eyes along the expanse of the decaying wall he could detect no sign of life. The house appeared to be entirely deserted. The coachman had circled back to the bend of the road and drawn his horses to the side, prepared for a long wait. Donaldson saw the man watching them, curiously. The two Americans were about to step back and seek another entrance when there was a hasty step from the other side of the wall, and a cautious face peered through the rusted bars before them.

Donaldson recognized it as that of Montez's second. The man fumbled with a clogged lock and finally wrenched his key through it. The gate swung creakingly open.

Morton stepped briskly through, and Donaldson followed with his long, rubber-covered bundle under his arm. Their guide was alone. Bowing with a curt "Good-evening," he turned toward a two-storied, square house set in a yard of tangled weeds and unkempt walks. Obviously the place had not been occupied for years. Donaldson found himself idly speculating as to how the Montez party had gained admittance, and whether or not the owner was aware of the interesting event scheduled for the evening.

The Panamanian swung steadily ahead, skirting the corner of the silent house, and continuing until they passed through a second and smaller gate into

a square plot of ground, which had evidently once been a carefully cultivated garden. Signs of this fact were frequent in the ruins of a score or more of flower beds, arranged in a really artistic circle, and now given over to a riot of heavy weeds. In the center, a hurried attempt had been made to clear away the underbrush, and a roughly mowed spot of perhaps ten feet in length showed the Americans that they had reached the end of their journey and the scene of the duel. At his first swift glance, Donaldson fancied that the others had not yet arrived. But he was mistaken. At the sound of their footsteps, a small door in the rear of the house swung open and a quartet of silent figures emerged. The first three were strangers. The last was Enrico Montez, with his white duck suit of the morning changed for a dark blue serge. He was apparently in high spirits, nudging his companion in an effort to bring home the point of a joke which he finished in a burst of careless laughter as he stepped into the garden. Montez darted an indifferent glance toward the Americans, affecting not to see Donaldson's nod, and scowling blackly at sight of Morton.

Donaldson stepped back, drawing his hand through Morton's arm as their guide rejoined his companions.

"I don't like this, old fellow! Did you count them? Five to two! Why, man, they would have us at their mercy if this was a trap!"

"What difference does it make—five or ten?" answered Morton carelessly. "They wouldn't dare attempt any crookedness, Don! You forget that we are American officers!"

"And you forget that our friends know perfectly well that under the circumstances we would not dare to proclaim the fact! I half wish that we had taken a chance on telling the yarn to Blake. He may be something of a martinet, but I'd gamble that he wouldn't refuse a brother officer a service like this!"

"Well, it's too late now! Here our friend comes back to finish the pow-wow. Cut it short, Don, and let's get it over with!"

Morton sountered over to a corner of the garden, and lighted a cigaret. His

watch showed that it was exactly on the stroke of six. The Panamanian daylight was good for a full two hours yet. Donaldson untied his bundle and let the covering fall to the ground as he displayed the weapons. The Panamanian shook his head, and walked over to Montez, returning with a second pair of swords.

"Here, Mort!" called his friend. "I want your judgment."

Morton leaned back against the low stone wall, and sent a circle of blue smoke floating lazily above his head.

"A kick about the weapons, eh?" he drawled impatiently. "Let Montez fight with whatever he wants to. It will be all the same in the end. I don't fancy that the point of one of his own swords will feel any pleasanter between his ribs than mine will!"

Montez paused in the midst of his flippant observations to the men at his elbows to swear a sudden oath. Donaldson ended the threatened dispute by re-tying his weapons with a scowl and letting the Panamanian carry the issue.

"Any more red tape?" said Morton lightly. "If so, will I have time for another cigaret?"

Donaldson advanced slowly to the cleared plot in the center and swept his eyes over the ground, and then toward the sun. Apparently there was no choice of position. One of the quartet of figures around Montez produced a small black bag and deposited a row of surgical instruments rather ostentatiously on the grass.

"I guess we are ready, Mort," called Donaldson, "unless there is something else that you can suggest."

"Nothing at all, thank you!" answered Morton dropping the stub of his cigaret under his heel. "I am glad that our friend, the doctor, is so solicitous of Señor Montez's safety that he has his instruments all ready for him!"

"Take care, my bantam, that you don't need his services first!" growled Montez. Morton took the two weapons extended to him and contemptuously handed one back to his opponent without deigning to test either. The two seconds took their positions at the shoulders of their men, and motioned the other members of the group back. But

there was no need of the gesture. The Panamanians took good care to see that they were safely out of harm's way without urging.

Morton shifted his sword to his left hand, and then returned it to his right with a click of his teeth. "If you don't mind, gentlemen, I would prefer to dispense with the formality of a salute! This is not a grand-stand exhibition!"

"As you will!" returned Montez's second. "I presume that we are both agreed that the first blood will end it?"

Donaldson nodded, but Morton laughed outright. "First blood? You amuse me! First blood will be last blood when my sword punctures that pretty shirt-front of the Señor's!"

Montez's lips tightened, and save for a sullen gleam in his restless eyes, he gave no sign that he heard.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" called his second. "Very well, then!" and he stepped back so precipitately that he tripped over a flower bed and almost fell headlong.

The two swords met each other with a swift, grating clash. Neither apparently yielded an inch. Montez abruptly withdrew his weapon and lunged viciously forward with a haste that almost reached under Morton's guard before he had time to protect himself. The Lieutenant flushed.

"So you mean business, my friend? Good! How do you relish this?" His own weapon flashed downward so abruptly that it seemed to bend as it grazed his opponent's sword. Montez caught the point on his hilt within an inch of his breast. Morton laughed as he saw a single bead of perspiration drip from his forehead.

The Panamanian was a skillful antagonist. Morton felt this with the instinct of the veteran fencer on the instant their swords clashed. The fact vaguely surprised him. And what was more to the point, he suddenly realized that so far as the other was concerned, this was no play affair. The glitter of Montez's eye and the vicious lunge of his wrist showed that he meant to kill him if he could.

For a few moments the weapons circled about each other like two serpents, hissing and swaying with the desire to

spring. Once they rasped against each other with a strength that sent a shower of sparks dancing outward into the air. From behind Montez, some one gasped heavily. Donaldson crouched forward in his eagerness, with his nails digging into his palms.

And then Morton laughed again. The sound was almost as startling as the report of a rifle. Montez fumbled in a sideward lunge, and recovered himself with an effort as Morton's weapon danced through the opening in his guard.

"Really, Señor, you are giving me some very pleasant exercise!" cried the Lieutenant almost gaily. "And I was needing it badly! I trust that our friends are as much entertained as I am! But we must not let this grow tame. That would never do. Suppose we enliven it a bit. —Something like this!"

His sword shot up and then wrenching aside Montez's weapon with a force which almost sent it spinning over his head, changed its path to a flashing stroke downward. The Panamanian dropped to his knee. Otherwise, his right arm would have been pinioned to his side.

For the first time a ghastly pallor showed in his sallow face, and his sword wavered uncertainly as it returned to the guard. Morton saw his advantage and pressed it swiftly. His weapon again lunged forth irresistibly. There was a ringing clash of steel, another vicious shower of sparks, and then as Montez caught the dancing point again scarcely a fraction of an inch from his flesh, there came a hoarse voice from the locked gate and a sharp pounding on the bars. The two men instinctively dropped their weapons to their sides.

"Open! Open in the name of the law!"

Montez's second sprang forward and gripped Morton's sword. "The police!" he gasped hoarsely.

Donaldson swore as Morton turned a bewildered face to him. "Can't you see it all now, man? We are caught in a trap!"

CHAPTER XI

The clamor at the gate steadily increased. Montez sheathed his sword and

glowered sullenly at Morton. The Lieutenant's keen eyes however, fancied that they detected a subtle expression of relief in his glance.

The group of Panamanians hesitated uncertainly. Then Montez's second moved toward the intruders outside with a shrug of resignation. Donaldson blocked his path.

"What are you going to do, man?"

"The only thing I can do under the circumstances, Señor—open the gate!"

"You don't mean to say that you are going to let us be taken like rats?"

The Panamanian shrugged. "What else is there?"

"But surely there is some other way out?"

"Where? The yard is probably surrounded, and if it were not, they would have the gate broken down before we could scale the wall. They are smashing it now."

For a single, brief instant, Donaldson's fingers itched with the desire to take the fellow by the throat. "I protest! In the name of fair play, you surely won't stand by and see my friend and myself dragged to a cell without even a dash for it!" Donaldson whirled on the listening group behind as the din at the gate redoubled. "You are Panamanian citizens, and we are American officers. At most, this affair can only mean a passing embarrassment to you, while it will mean ruin to us! We trusted your honor, gentlemen, and I demand that you show it!"

A sullen silence answered him. Donaldson's eyes narrowed. For the first time, his vague surmises that the duel was a clever plot, with just such an ending arranged from the first, became a certainty.

Montez's second, at a signal from the others, suddenly circled around his shoulder and darted toward the yielding gate.

A gleam of satisfaction flashed across the Panamanian's flushed face.

"Resistance of the law is a grave offence—in this country, Señor!" he sneered. "I will have sufficient explanations to make without that. Your friend brought this upon himself. I didn't!"

"Then I brand you all for a set of cowardly jackals!" flared Donaldson,

casting all discretion to the wind. "The whole sneaking pack of you are not worth a white man's right arm, and if ever I get out of this, I'll fight you all together and undertake to give you a trouncing that will make an earthquake seem like a toy eruption! Come on, Mort! I'm not going to stand here like a tin soldier and be dragged off by the heels!"

Morton was not at his shoulder, however. He had darted forward toward the house in the confusion, recalling, of a sudden, the door through which the Panamanians had come. Donaldson reached him as his hand caught the knob. But it was locked. And even as he made the discovery, the man at the gate had the key inserted and was shouting to the officers outside that he had come to their assistance.

"Quick! The back wall!" gasped Donaldson. "It's our only chance."

As he turned, the resisting door was suddenly opened from the inside and a woman's white face peered through the narrow crack it disclosed. Morton recognized the features of Inez Montez with a wild mingling of emotions.

She reached a hand through and caught his coat. "Quick!" she gasped. "They will be here in another minute!"

Morton hesitated as he turned his head toward Donaldson. The latter was already ten yards away, evidently thinking he was at his shoulder.

"Don!" he called loudly. "Don!"

In the confusion, Donaldson failed to hear. Morton raised his hands to his lips for another trial when the girl behind the door desperately flung it back and caught his shoulder.

"Are you a fool? I'm not saving him but you—and he couldn't make it now if he tried."

"Then I'll be taken with him!" growled Morton stubbornly.

"And throw away the last chance of saving your government?" the girl whispered hoarsely in his ear. "Can't you see it? With you behind the bars, the Canal plans will be out of the country in another six hours!"

Morton caught his tongue on an oath. "Fool! I'm worse than a fool!" And whirling Inez behind him, he sprang after her and slammed the door.

The girl deftly shot the bolt as a man leaped against the portals. The wood quivered with the shock but the fastening held.

Beckoning Morton to follow her, she led the way through a narrow, white-walled passage-way, exhaling a musty, odor as of a cellar. A few feet farther on, however, it took a sudden turn upward and ended at a second door, which stood ajar. Behind this, a shallow flight of narrow steps disappeared toward the upper floors of the house. The noise in the garden had faded away. Even the pounding on the door had ceased.

Inez Montez caught up her skirts and ascended the steps without a word, Morton closely in her wake, and so occupied with his own thoughts that the moodiness of his guide had not impressed him. The girl made her way out into a sparsely furnished room, containing only two chairs and a table, all of which were thickly coated with a gray dust. As Morton followed, she turned and faced him, sending a long, searching look into his questioning features.

"I think I have saved you—for the time."

"Why?" he demanded boldly.

"The reason is mine. The fact is sufficient for you."

Morton strode to the window and looked down into the yard. The garden was concealed around a corner of the building, but from the silence, he judged the police and his late companions had left. What had become of Donaldson?

"But they will not be content to let me slip out of their hands like this," he said turning again. "If they really want to make me a prisoner, it strikes me that their task is still a simple one."

The girl laughed. "You show that you do not know the secrets of the Amador mansion. My brother is familiar enough with the house to be aware that a street passage tunnels out through the wall into a rear alley. He has made up his mind, of course, that you long ago took this!"

"But he cannot know that you are directing me?"

"No?" the girl said, laughing again, a trifle hysterically. "Enrico is not quite a fool. He would know there is not another person in Panama who could save

you, except me, and not another who would!"

"Was it then really a trap to catch me?" demanded Morton.

"You ask too many questions, Lieutenant, but that much should be plain—even to you. I did not know it until less than an hour ago, too late to warn you. Then I made my way here to await developments. If Enrico had worsted you, the police signal would not have been given. They waited outside until they caught the word. With you and your friend in a Panamanian cell—"

"But we are not; at least I am not!" interrupted Morton grimly. "And now what?"

In answer, the girl walked suddenly across the room until she could have touched him. "Will you trust me?"

"It seems that I have no option," responded Morton ungratefully, and then catching the pained flush on the face before him, he added—"You will admit, Señorita, that my experience with the Montez family is hardly such as to inspire confidence—even in you!"

"I am sorry," the girl said softly, "because what I am about to do will deepen that distrust!"

As she spoke, she stepped back, and before Morton divined her intention, had sprung through the door and slammed it shut behind her. The ominous click of the key in the lock met the Lieutenant's ears as he darted after her.

"Señorita!" he cried. "Señorita!" There was no answer. He raised his voice. "Inez! Surely you are not as treacherous as the rest?"

A muffled voice answered him. Evidently the girl had heard and returned.

"You are my prisoner, Mr. Morton!"

"So I perceive!"—grimly.

"I am sorry that I cannot offer you a meal. Unless you had an early dinner, you must be hungry."

"Don't mention it!"

"Of course, you will try to escape, but if you take my advice you will save your energies."

"Thank you!"

"You will find that there is but one door, and that I am sure will resist even your muscles. As for the windows, both of them happen to be barred—with American iron. And if you should break

through, there is a drop of over thirty feet and a stone walk is rather hard to fall on!"

"You are really quite considerate!"

"Oh, by the way, I left a new novel on the table. I was reading it myself, but I will loan it to you under the circumstances. And if you have any tobacco, you should be fairly comfortable until I return."

"Then, I can expect your return? Delighted!"

There was a moment's silence, and Morton could have sworn that he heard a repressed laugh.

"Oh, yes, I will be back. I am afraid that even your nerves would give way in the dark. I have an errand which will take two or perhaps three hours. You can look for your captor at nine! Until then—*au revoir!* I am afraid you would resent the Panamanian greeting just now!"

Morton picked up a chair, and then set it down heavily. From behind the door, came the voice again.

"Oh, I say, Lieutenant, how does it feel to be the prisoner of a woman?"

Morton didn't answer, and the next moment he realized that his captress was descending the stairs.

CHAPTER XII

Lieutenant Morton walked to the window and stood staring sullenly down at the stones below. The girl's words were true. The three bars before him could not have been broken except by hours of work and the hardest saw. For a moment he yielded to a paroxysm of rage. To be trapped first by the brother—and then by the sister! It was too much! He bitterly regretted that he had not taken his chances in the garden with Donaldson. There at least, he would have had a man's chance of a fight. Where was Donaldson now? He reflected with a bitter trace of belated satisfaction that Don had probably cracked several heads if he *had* been taken.

The Lieutenant walked back to the table and thumbed the book which the girl had left. There was not the faintest thought in his mind that he would read

it, that he *could* read. Whether it was the lure of the title or a return of his philosophy, however, he found himself drawing out his cigaret case and dusting a chair. The tobacco brought back in a measure his natural buoyancy. He blew a cloud of smoke over his head and turned the title page. The girl had said she would be back in three hours. Three hours! Raving would do him no good in the interim. His eyes dropped to the first page. So long as he had to bow to the inevitable, why not do so gracefully? He crossed his legs and put his cigaretts conveniently at his elbow. Afterward, it was a source of questionable satisfaction to Morton that he conquered himself in the dreary wait that followed and even mustered a semblance of stoical calm as he heard his watch tick slowly past seven and then eight. The shadows by this time were fast merging into the blackness of the Panamanian night, but the Lieutenant found a half-burned candle on the table—a relic no doubt of the former occupants—and managed to keep his eyes riveted to the pages by the aid of its sputtering beams.

It was shortly after the half hour when a soft knock, so soft that it was repeated before he caught it, sounded on the portals outside.

"Are you there, Lieutenant?"

"At your service!" said Morton, tossing aside his book. "May I offer you the hospitality of my princely domicile?"

There was the sound of a key turning, and the door swung open to admit Inez Montez, with an electric flashlight held over her head.

"You are just in time," cried Morton with a bow. "I am on my last cigaret. If you had waited a half-hour later, I might have been distracted."

The girl glanced from him to the book, with an involuntary glance of admiration.

"Really, I wouldn't have thought your hot head capable of being controlled so easily!"

"Having no spiders or mice to amuse me, I was forced to make the best of things!" answered Morton lightly, with his eyes flashing to the passage-way she had just left.

"Oh, you needn't meditate a rush, my friend! There is no need of it, I

assure you. Besides, we are no longer alone!"

Morton darted a swift glance of unbelief toward her.

"There are strange events transpiring within these walls, to-night, Lieutenant—not the least strange being the fact that I have purposely detained you here to be a witness of them!"

"Explain yourself, Señorita!"

"I prefer that they explain themselves, if you don't mind. Now, if you are quite ready, we will go. I fancy that I had better lead the way!"

"I assure you that I will be under the painful necessity of effecting my escape at the first chance that offers. You are a woman, and I might have to be rude to you, which I would regret!"

"You are at liberty to go now, if you wish!" said the girl unexpectedly. "But I would advise you to hold your patience a few moments. Unless I am mistaken, the sight which I am about to reveal to you will shatter all your thoughts of escape. In fact, I am *quite* sure that it will!"

The girl turned at an abrupt right angle in the narrow passage and ran her fingers over the apparently solid wall. A moment later, a concealed spring gave forth a low click, and a section of the painted panels swung inward. She stepped through the opening, with Morton so closely at her heels that he could easily have encircled her waist and snatched the light from her. But apparently she no longer gave a thought to the previous relations of captor and prisoner.

Morton saw that they were at the beginning of another flight of stairs. This time it led downward. With her hand to her lips, although the injunction was hardly necessary, Inez Montez began a slow and careful descent. From the suggestion of dust everywhere around him, Morton could easily imagine that the stairs had not been used for months, perhaps years.

The flight ended abruptly at a square landing, blocked by a locked door. The Lieutenant's guide fumbled with a key in her belt and replaced it after they had passed through. Morton's astonished eyes saw that they had emerged into what was evidently the dining-room of

the house. The girl hesitated at the wall, with her head bent forward listening. Morton followed her movement and fancied that he could detect the confused murmur of voices from beyond.

Evidently satisfied, the girl moved slowly across the carpet, flashing her light in a narrow beam before them. At the opposite wall, she knelt down, with her slender, white fingers pushing gently against the corner of a huge gilt picture. Morton peering over her shoulder, looked through an opened peep-hole into a brightly lighted apartment, and the next instant bounded back so sharply that he knocked the light to the floor. In the brief glance, he had made the most startling discovery of the evening.

A circle of five figures was grouped around a long table, over which a dozen candles shed a peculiarly soft and shadowy glow. Four of the figures were men. Two were unknown to Morton, but in their companions he recognized Winslow Gillette and the debonair figure of Frank Oliver. On the opposite side of the table sat a young woman with a very grave, very flushed face, nervously tapping the cloth with her fingers and studying the quartet of faces at her shoulders with a steadiness which did not lose a move around her. The girl was Virginia Vare.

Inez Montez repressed a sharp cry of consternation at Morton's awkwardness, and for an instant the group in the other room paused in their animated conversation as though startled, by the unexpected sound. Evidently they thought an investigation unnecessary, however. When the Lieutenant resumed his position at the peep-hole at the corner of the picture, the circle at the table was again plunged in the discussion which the falling electric tube had interrupted.

It was easy not only to see every corner of the room, but to hear the conversation of the occupants. As Morton crouched forward, he found it hard to believe that he was not actually in the apartment beyond.

Gillette was speaking, and his drawling tones might have been narrating a bit of idle gossip. He leaned forward on the table, with a lighted cigar sending a blue spiral of smoke above his eager face and rumpled hair.

"The proposition then seems to be absurdly simple, comrades. We have secured that which we sought. Our friend from Washington gives us the welcome news that she has satisfactorily attended to the remainder of the details of our *coup*. When I am convinced that she is speaking the truth, I, for one, will vote to leave the conclusion of the affair in her hands—but I must be convinced that *she is speaking the truth!*"

Virginia Vare gave no sign that she heard him beyond a slight restlessness of her tapping fingers.

"You have heard Mr. Gillette's statement," said Frank Oliver, raising his face and peering across the table at the girl. "What have you to say in answer?"

Virginia Vare hesitated, apparently weighing her words. "You ask me to show you my hand, gentlemen, and place myself at your mercy, forgetting you have not yet given me definite proof that in your turn, you will give me that which I have journeyed twenty-five hundred miles to obtain. Give me your proofs first, and I pledge you that I will give you mine with a promptness which will end this bargaining. Pish! I am sick of it all even now! You are as suspicious as Shylock, himself! Let's have done with this red tape or I will be tempted to throw up the whole thing!"

"You talk as though you are at liberty to do what you please, Miss Vare!" sneered one of the two men who had not yet spoken, a swarthy, heavily-bearded man, whose small eyes were as glittering as two points of steel.

"And am I not, Mr. Jacobson?" burst out the girl angrily, half rising.

"You forget the mandate of the Blue Fan, sister!" was the mocking answer.

The girl sank back in her seat, her self-assertiveness crumbling like a broken pane of glass.

Quick to press his advantage, the man continued with a soft, purring note like a huge cat, crouched for a spring—"You came here in the name of the Blue Fan, prepared to obey such injunctions as might be given to you. You are no longer your own mistress, Miss Vare, and in the name of the Fan I command you to answer at once such questions as the Grand Master may choose to address to you!"

"Very well," said the girl sullenly.

Her questioner consulted a memorandum at his elbow. "Then by your phrase that you have completed negotiations with O. B., I may take it that you have—"

"Done just what I say. I have seen the Japanese agent and am to meet him at Lima on the sixth," the girl answered in a low, lifeless tone. "He will stick to his agreement—if we stick to ours."

"And that is—"

"Forty thousand dollars in gold on the delivery of the plans!"

For a moment, the scene whirled about Morton in a fantastic circle and he clutched at a chair for support. The words seemed to be repeating themselves in a dull echo. "Forty thousand dollars in gold on the delivery of the plans!" Of a sudden, he wondered if Inez Montez had known what he would hear. By a curious twist, he was conscious of a wild rage against his guide, and not the white-faced girl who by her own words had branded herself even worse than he thought.

Inez Montez gripped him by the arm so sharply that her nails forced themselves into his hot, throbbing flesh. "Quick! if you would see the finish!"

Morton forced himself again to the peep-hole. Virginia Vare had risen to her feet and stood facing the group before her.

"And now, gentlemen, if I have made myself clear and convincing"—she bowed mockingly toward Winslow Gillette—"will you kindly attend to your details?"

The swarthy man at the head of the table jerked his hand toward a side door which Morton had not yet noticed. The heavy curtains screening it were jerked aside and Enrico Montez entered the room, supporting a flabby-faced, glassy-eyed man, who blinked uncertainly as the light faced him, raising a trembling hand as though to shield himself from its glare. The surprises of the night were not yet at an end. It was the kidnaped servant of Colonel Pendergrast—José.

The little man seemed instinctively to recognize the crisis and to brace himself for it. He made a desperate effort to straighten himself and made a half-military salute toward the dark-visaged

man, whose boring eyes were suddenly turned in his direction.

"Have you discharged the mission of the Blue Fan?"

José nodded weakly. It was evident that he was in the last throes of weakness—or terror.

"Then in the name of the Fan I command you to produce the evidence of the truth of what you say!"

José tottered toward a chair and motioned to young Montez to remove his coat. "The lining, the black lining!" he gasped as he tried in vain to unfasten his knife. The Panamanian tore a deep slit in the wrinkled garment without thought of the ruin he was leaving. His fingers clutched a narrow, oil-skin-wrapped package and he held it above his head with a guttural note of triumph.

Even the swarthy spokesman at the head of the table betrayed something of his agitation as he snapped—"Pass it to me."

Montez stepped forward to execute the command when a slender form bounded toward him. There was the swish of skirts and Morton saw the lithe arm of Virginia Vare spring toward the package. Her fingers closed upon it, jerked it free, and she darted back. The next instant she had seized a heavy decanter and hurled it with unerring aim at the cluster of candles. There was the crash of splintering glass, and then amid a hoarse burst of enraged shouts, the room was plunged into darkness.

CHAPTER XIII

"The window!" bellowed some one hoarsely. "She can't escape by the door!"

Morton heard a confused rush forward, and the sound of a bitter scuffle. A sharp cry of pain in a man's heavy voice rang out. Then abruptly a yellow spurt of flame and the spiteful crack of a revolver echoed through the house.

"She has a gun, men!" a shrill voice, which Morton recognized as Oliver's, cried hysterically. "Don't let her shoot again!"

The revolver spoke again and Morton heard the bullet crash through the

wall. A heavy cry of triumph followed so closely after it that before its echoes died away, the Lieutenant realized the girl was a prisoner. A candle flared up in the corner and by its flickering flames, Morton saw Virginia Vare pinioned in the combined grasp of Oliver and the swarthy Jacobson.

"Oh, you needn't be so careful of me!" she cried tauntingly. "I have sense enough to realize that I have played the game—and lost!"

"And we'll take precious good care to see that you don't have an opportunity to play it again!" growled Oliver.

The girl walked back to the center of the room in the arms of her captors. Jacobson signified to his silent companion to take his place, and resumed his seat at the head of the table. Morton saw that he had the oil-skin packet safe in his huge, hairy hand.

"And now—what?" The question came from Virginia Vare. If the men were expecting a terror-stricken collapse, they were disappointed. The leader shot a long, silent glance into her grimly set features, with his fingers toying idly with the packet before him.

"I presume that you refer to yourself. That question is a minor one. The main point of issue is that our plans must be entirely changed. We must find another agent to take your place, Miss Vare. I fancy that your usefulness to us is gone!"

"I am inclined to that opinion, myself!" the girl answered boldly.

"I should have said," resumed Jacobson, "that your usefulness is gone, not only to us—but to all others. You are aware that the penalty of treachery is death—and the Blue Fan knows no mercy. Is it not so, comrades?"

A silence, more ominous than words, answered him.

The girl affected to shudder. "Really, it would be a pity to interrupt your proceedings with an affair so trivial as my execution. Am I to die at sunrise—or by moonlight?"

The grim man at the head of the table turned to the others without deigning to reply.

"Comrades, you are familiar with the rules of our order. On a question so vital as this, I shall ask that we ballot

with the white and black balls, although I am aware that there is but one result possible. You are supplied with both. Unfortunately I have no regularly appointed ballot-box. We must make shift with this dish. Will you kindly pass it, Montez? I do not wish unduly to influence any of you in a wise decision. If there is any person here who feels the prisoner should be tendered mercy, a white ball will be sufficient to delay her punishment until a fuller investigation of her case!"

It was an obviously awed Montez who circled the table, with his dish extended woodenly before him. He did not glance into the receptacle once during his round, depositing his own vote as he handed it back. The leader emptied its contents onto the white cloth with a jerk. Five black balls rolled to the edge of the table. José had again subsided into a collapse.

In spite of herself, Virginia Vare paled.

"It is death!" the man before her announced curtly. "And there is but one official method of execution known to the Blue Fan—the flagon of extermination. If you will kindly oblige me farther, Montez, with a glass of that estimable port, I will prepare the little concoction. Having dispensed with this disagreeable detail, I trust that we can settle the real business of the evening promptly. If you have any request to make, Miss Vare, I may as well tell you that something less than three minutes lies between you and eternity!"

The girl did not answer as she watched the hand before her deftly transfer the contents of a pocket vial to the wineglass. The mixture assumed a peculiar greenish tinge and a faint bubble rose to the surface.

"You will not find this as unpleasant as it looks, I assure you!" was the grim comment. "Not that I can speak from personal experience of its taste, or care to! You have said nothing as yet, Miss Vare. Perhaps you are one of those fortunate mortals who are always prepared for an emergency!"

The girl caught her breath, but she did not break her silence.

The man rose to his feet and advanced toward her with the glass in his hand.

"May I have the honor?" he said mockingly, holding it out to her.

The girl made no move to take it.

"Really, you surprise me, Miss Vare. I gave you credit for more nerve!"

"And supposing that I refuse to drink?" the girl asked steadily, lifting her eyes for the first time to the passionless face bent upon hers.

"Not drink!" the man cried in mock alarm. "But you must!" And then as the girl's hands remained motionless at her sides, he jerked out with a quick change of tone—"Oh, you have the alternative of—this! But that would not be nearly so pleasant!" He slipped a revolver from his pocket and held it dangling in his left hand.

"I am sure you would not care to force me to such a disagreeable resort! What time is it, Montez? I want you to tell me when three minutes have elapsed—not one second more, understand. On the dot, I pledge you my word that I shall discharge this little toy into that pretty body of yours, Miss Vare—if you have not taken this glass!" He deposited the flagon on the table. "Are you ready, Montez?" He leveled the weapon as he spoke, full at the girl's breast.

Inez Montez stepped back from the slit in the wall, and darted a glance toward the spot where Morton had been standing, but he was gone. The girl sprang out into the room, fumbling for her flashlight. And then she saw its yellow light burst out from the other end of the apartment. The Lieutenant was focusing it on a door in the corner. The next instant his hand had grasped the knob. Even as she darted toward him, it swung open in his grasp.

For an instant, the group before him, absorbed in the thrilling drama, did not see him. It was Virginia Vare who first caught sight of him, and it was the sudden change in her features, which brought the others whirling in his direction.

"You have given me a most pleasant surprise, gentlemen!" And then he raised his hands to his mouth. "Take the window, Shanton. The others are just behind me. We can guard the door. Come on, boys! They can't escape. Now! Altogether."

The Lieutenant sprang forward, straight into the center of the group before him. For a second, he fancied that the *ruse* would succeed. But the keen eyes of the leader, flashing toward the door behind him, divined the situation.

"It's a bluff, men! He's alone!"

There was a growl of rage, and the occupants of the room launched themselves toward him in a mass which brought him staggering to his knees, with his revolver discharged aimlessly into the ceiling. Morton caught one of his assailants under the chin with the butt, but before he could stiffen to an upright position, he was pinioned to the floor and the gun wrenched from his fingers.

"I did my best for you, girlie!" he called, panting. "Another minute, and I would have turned the trick!"

"How about this—as a substitute?" called a crisp voice from the window. A powerful fist sent a rain of glass to the floor, and a tall, khaki-clad man, with the heads of half-a-dozen others at his heels, sprang into the room.

"Shanton!" gasped Morton.

"And Donaldson!" came a vigorous shout from the ledge.

Morton was conscious of a stampede of rushing figures and the sound of men grappling in the shadows. Then as the weight of his captors lifted from his breast and he struggled to his elbow, the heel of a flying boot—he could not tell whether it was friend or foe—caught him on the forehead, and he sank back into swift and sickening oblivion.

His unconsciousness, however, was only for the moment. It was the caress of a soft hand on his aching temples that revived him, but as he opened his eyes, it was withdrawn so quickly that he did not see its owner. He struggled unsteadily to his feet in spite of a protesting arm stretched forth to stop him. A dozen of Shanton's men filled the room, and there was the sound of more from the adjoining apartment. Donaldson in the doorway was fingering his revolver restlessly.

"We've got 'em all, Mort—even that black whiskered beggar! I've been trying to persuade Shanton to make him drink a toast to us with that delicious "wine of extermination." He is really

the only person here that I would honor so highly. Oh, you would, would you? Another move like that, Mr. Ebony Whiskers, and I will send this bullet through that ample stomach of yours. I haven't had a chance to fire this gun to-night!"

"How did you escape?" Morton asked weakly, subsiding into a chair as he suddenly realized the extent of the dizziness that was enveloping him.

"Oh, I made them think I had gone over the wall, and then slipped through the gate while they were hot on my trail! Even A. J. Raffles couldn't have done it better, eh?"

Morton's eyes circled to a white-faced girl in a chair near him who was trying very hard to conquer a very feminine fit of hysterics.

"Don't look at me, Ronald! If you do, I shall cry and that would annoy you all. I am just beginning to realize—"

"What?"

"How much of a woman I am! I'll make a silly spectacle of myself yet!"

"Oh, no, you wont, because you have work to do, Miss Vare," said Shanton abruptly. "Who has those Canal Plans?"

"Jacobson in there, the swarthy man with the whiskers. I saw him reach for them as he ran!"

Donaldson advanced into the inner room.

"Come on, Whiskers, out with them! I'd rather shoot you than not, you know!"

There was a stifled curse from the prisoner and he dropped the oil-skin packet to the floor. Donaldson tossed it upon the table and resumed his post. Shanton ripped open the flap, and emptied onto the cloth a dozen folded sheets—of blank paper.

For a moment, the group stared at one another in utter bewilderment.

"Sold, after all!" muttered Shanton. Virginia Vare sprang to her feet and feverishly tossed the papers apart. But the fact could not be altered. The fortification plans had disappeared. Only a worthless jumble of foolscap filled the oil-skin packet.

"Is it possible that you are looking for the stolen government papers?" innocently queried a low voice from the

other end of the room. Morton glanced in its direction with a flush. He had completely forgotten Inez Montez.

The girl rose languidly from her seat and stepped across to the table, fumbling in her waist.

"Perhaps *this* is what you are seeking!" She extended a fat, paper packet to Shanton with a bow. "I took the liberty of relieving José of this when I found him this afternoon, and substituting blanks. I thought it would be much safer! Quite simple, wasn't it?"

"And he was the thief after all?" asked Shanton incredulously.

"Oh, it really didn't need either cleverness or boldness. José among his other peculiar items of knowledge, knows more of the secrets of the Indian Voodoo men than he would care, or dare, to tell.

"In their medical lore is an herb, which, mixed with tobacco, will produce a sleep almost as deep as coma. José smuggled it into the Colonel's pipe the night of the robbery—the Colonel was in an evil humor or the chance wouldn't have offered! The rest was simple. Colonel Pendergrast slept like a log while José took his time at the plunder. Is there anything else?"

"I think perhaps I owe you an explanation also," said Virginia Vare slowly. "Captain Shanton knows now what he didn't know two hours ago—that I am an agent of the United States Secret Service."

"And the shrewdest member of the diplomatic staff!" broke in Shanton admiringly.

"In fact," continued the girl demurely. "I have been engaged in that fascinating field of labor for something more than six years! It was under orders from Washington that I came to Panama on the chance that I would be able to prevent this curious series of events, and carry the fortification plans back with me."

"And the Blue Fan?" cried Morton.

The girl's eyes clouded. "That is a chapter which I hope to regard as forever closed. The Blue Fan is really the most unscrupulous and dangerous organization of diplomatic adventurers in existence. It has branches in a dozen countries. Even I do not know who its

central chief is. I was forced to join it in Tokio two years ago in order to save the American government from being hopelessly embroiled with Japan in a little affair, which but for my humble intervention and knowledge of the projects of the Fan, might have resulted most disastrously. But I was playing with fire, and I have scorched my hands a half-dozen times since. So far as I know, however, to-night's episode will break its power on the American continent. I will confess that when I first learned of its designs on the Panama Canal, I was as nearly in a complete funk as I have ever been in my life. Is there anything else?"

Donaldson turned from a survey of his prisoners long enough to answer emphatically, "Something like a week's apologies from me, Miss Vare. I might finish in six days, but I doubt it!"

Inez Montez turned to the door.

"If you will loan me a carriage, Captain Shanton, I will wish you all good-night!"

From his position Donaldson gave a sudden wink and then a vicious scowl at the Chief. The latter allowed a grin to spread over his face as he said curtly to his men—"Now then, let's get the

prisoners into the yard. Miss Vare, will you nurse Lieutenant Morton until we return?"

The door slammed behind Donaldson, bringing up the rear guard, and pausing to kiss his hand to the couple behind him.

"Half of that is for you, Miss Vare!"

Morton sighed contentedly. "You see, even old Don already takes it for granted."

"What?"

"Why that you will keep this job of nursing me for life! You can't very well get out of it now, can you?"

"I'm not going to try, Ronald!" said the girl softly.

A hasty hand fumbled with the lock, and as the two glanced up, the flushed face of Inez Montez appeared in the doorway.

"I beg your pardon!" she stammered, "I thought you had gone." And then as she caught sight of the sudden rosy blush on the two faces, her eyes flashed.

"Why don't you try the garden, Lieutenant? They say the Panamanian moonlight would force a man to make love to a wooden Indian, Miss Vare!"

"Thank you!" said Virginia Vare sweetly, as the other disappeared.

The Temple that Solomon Built

By LLOYD KENYON JONES

THE CROWD had left the great arena. The sputtering lights had been extinguished, and the amphitheatre was enveloped in darkness. That night the gladiator had fallen—had failed miserably and utterly—and despite his thousand triumphs in the days gone by, hisses and cat-calls had been the wrestler's portion on this night of his downfall.

Solomon Klein, manager and friend

of Sandy McLeon, wept. It was not that there were no more grapplers in the great, busy world—but to him Sandy had been the thing apart—the possessor of the perfect temple.

"Sandy," Klein whispered, as he puffed and worked over the sodden form before him, "Sandy, man, it isn't too late. There must be another chance for you, boy—only it's the life, Sandy—the pace—that's killing you!"

Stupidly, through blood-shot eyes, the defeated wrestler looked at his manager and grinned.

"Thash a' right, ol' sport," he commented, and spat on the floor near the bench.

The fire was burning low in the stove and between sobbing and cursing, Solomon Klein succeeded in pulling the clothing over the vast shoulders and finally completed the task of draping the drooping wreck.

"Now, Solly," McLeon said, as he turned toward his manager with a leering laugh on his face, "we'll go down t' Dushman's—and we'll all get drunk. Come on, Solly, you cheap, poor li'l boob!"

The officer in charge of the building opened the door and stepped in.

"Come, now, Klein," he urged, "get this drunken stiff out o' here—he's a dead one and this aint no morgue."

"Who's a dead one?" the grappler asked, attempting to straighten up and simulate dignity.

"You—you, you Scotch stiff—why, I could throw you myself wid a hand tied behind me," retorted the policeman.

McLeon stretched languidly, and laughed again. His pride was moribund. The patrolman had called his number, and there had been no response.

Klein wiped the tear stains from his face and took his man by the arm. They pushed out into the slush and sleet of the winter's night and the contrast of the days that were with the night that was, sunk into the manager's heart like a leaden weight.

"Man, man!" he exclaimed, as he steadied the veering bulk of flabby flesh across the street, "why did you ever come to this—why?—tell me, why?"

Sandy lurched heavily and fell in the snow. As Klein stooped to pick him up, the wrestler swung his right arm viciously at the slight man who, of all men, remained when all other friends had fled:

"Le'me 'lone, you dog!" he snarled.

But the heart of the manager was too full of grief to pay much heed to this added insult.

With persuasion and much muscular effort, he finally righted the grappler, and silently the pair plodded along

through the darkened streets and the storm.

The next morning the papers would either entirely ignore the downfall of the great Scot—or they would abuse him to the last word. Of the two, Klein scarcely knew which would be the more preferable.

Eighteen months before, Sandy McLeon had thrown every opponent in sight. One after another of the mighty had fallen before him. What pride his manager had taken in those long, smooth muscles—in the majestic curves of force that rounded under the arms like a corselet of tempered steel!

For eight years, he had helped mold those tensile thongs into form—he had labored patiently, teaching the greater bulk, but lesser intellect, the value of a nice adjustment of mind and matter, showing him how to train and how to live. And at last had come what the little manager had always feared—the touching of the wine that cheers.

Only one hope still lingered in the heart of the smaller man. Of all the sins McLeon had adopted, he had not fallen because of any woman. Drink, gambling, brawls—all these had swept away the popularity of the giant—and each time he had attempted to reform, he had again fallen afoul the old gang—had groveled that much deeper in the mire.

Only because of the standing of Klein had he been offered this final match—and then purely on the stipulation that the winner would take all, carry away the entire purse.

Sandy had slipped away from him earlier in the evening, and had finally come into the arena fully dressed—adding to the disgust of the waiting multitude by stripping down to his tights in the ring.

He had laughed and boasted—and in the hands of his poorer rival, he had been putty.

As Klein thought of these details of the tragedy, a dry, choking sob shook his care-worn frame. No mother had ever seen her child placed in the cold, hard ground with a greater heartache than that which claimed the loyal little manager.

In vain he had searched his brain and

even now he sought ways and means. For he still believed; he knew that the slow, careful training that makes for grappling supremacy could not be wholly wiped out in a few brief months.

"Sandy," said he, speaking softly and low. "Sandy, my boy, I'm going away to-morrow—up to the great north woods to camp and hunt, to spend my time away from this cursed place and from the papers. Gee, Sandy, but I wish you were going, too."

A north wind drove the sleet harder and faster into their faces and the chill stilled the fire of the liquor that had surged through the wrestler's brain and blood.

He stopped and steadied himself and for a moment realization seemed to grip his stupefied mind.

"Solly," he said, "for God's sake, take me with you, Solly, don't leave me here alone."

And leaning against the brick wall near him, the big fellow gasped and moaned—then slipped his hand through his manager's arm. Silently and thoughtfully they continued their way toward their rooms.

For weeks Klein had watched his charge with zealous care. He had seen the offending paunch gradually disappear; he had caught the quicker glint in the eyes, the ruddy glow in the cheeks.

For nearly two months not a drop of liquor had passed the lips of Sandy McLeon.

And yet—he was like a child idling through the woods—kicking listlessly at roots of trees or watching the course of a cotton-tail with lack-lustre eyes.

The old logging camp in which they had housed themselves was comfortable enough and was roomy enough. They had taken in an abundance of supplies and a wealth of reading matter.

Only one thing in the form of print had Klein kept from his protégé—and that was the copies of the papers that had been published the morning following the downfall of Sandy McLeon.

Perhaps a psychological moment would arrive—an interval when he could send the hot blood of ambition charging through the arteries of the

grappler. Maybe the time would come when the call of the mat would be on—when a dream of redemption would manifest itself.

"Sandy," suggested Klein, as they pushed their way through the wet snow that afternoon on their return to camp, "if I ever made enough money, there's a farm down in Missouri I'd like to own—a hundred and sixty acres, boy, smiling under the big blue dome—with cattle grazing in the meadows and chickens clucking and parading about the barnyard, and plenty of eggs and milk and new stuff from the soil. Wouldn't a fellow be lucky with a plant like that?"

For several minutes McLeon was silent and then he started to hum some little ditty—a popular song he had learned on the road.

"Yes," he finally admitted, "I suppose a guy ought t' have something he can call his own. It was my fault, Solly—my fault. But—well, I guess it's me to pasture after this. I don't feel confident no more, Solly—not like I used to when I'd pull the ropes apart, crawl through and test the paddin' of the mat. I had time and distance, then, Solly—and you know, lad, I never went after a crotch or a Nelson and failed to connect."

"That's right," urged Klein, a smile stealing over his features. "Do you remember, Sandy, the night you met the big Turk—and there were forty rooters for him for every one there was for you?"

Sandy's face broadened into a grin, and a light twinkled in his blue eyes.

"Tell me how you felt that night, Sandy; it's like living it all over again."

"Why, Solly, when the preliminaries had been pulled off and the big shout went up for the wind-up, I came me-anderin' down the aisle between row after row of men—all shootin' gibes into me, boy, and tellin' me that Constantinople was going to conquer a Christian people. It tickled me all through, Solly, plumb down to my wish-bone.

"And see, over there in that corner (and here the Scot marked off a square in the snow with his rifle-butt) sat that long, peanut-headed, mournful lookin' gink from the Balkans. And somehow,

I could look through his dark hide, Solly, and see a streak of yellow there—and I knowed as sure as sin that the moment I clamped a good one on him and throwed a reef his way, he'd begin to wilt. He outweighed me fifty pounds, too, boy, and he had a hand like one of these here prize sides o' beef. Lord, but he was a monster!"

"And then—and then what, Sandy?" Klein prompted, laughing like a child in his new-found glee.

"And then, Solly, I was standin' over here—in this corner—and Young Lewis was whisperin' to me, and Toiler Burns, he was tellin' me the guy was Graeco-Roman and I should go after his legs—'cause it would be a new one on him, Solly. And then the referee called us up to the center o' the mat and he talks off the rules—and I seen that zook swallow hard, lad—yes, I sure did.

"Then there was a great stillness and when the referee says to go to it, I could hear our shoes a-squeakin' on the mat and I saw the big immigrant lolling over my way like a liner off Sandy Hook when the fog hangs low.

"I comes up to him quick—this way, Solly—just as though he was right there, and I grabs his left mitt with my right, and I pulled hard and quick—that way. I repeats seven times and he comes to his knees.

"And then I lets him up, and no sooner does he square himself on his pins than I ducks—right down this way—and grabs both legs and lifts him high over my head—and then just naturally let go.

"You could hear him grunt from where you stood—eh, Solly? I thought so. Well before he could get righted, I was back of him and had him crotched. That was a new one for a Graeco-Roman guy, and I was all catch-as-catch-can. Then I brings his feet up high, with him a flounderin' like a sea bass on a ball-room floor.

"His right fin was stickin' well under him and his left one was out—almost straight. I was on his left side, and my right arm was still workin' on the crotch—with his propellers pointin' up toward the Milky Way. And all at once, Solly, I catches that left wrist and bends it back—and he went into a

hammer the easiest and prettiest I ever see!"

McLeon leaned back against a birch, and laughed until the tears trickled down his cheeks.

The shadows were creeping through the pines and the stars were beginning to glisten, but to Solomon Klein this was a new introduction to the gods of fortune—to catch once more the glint, the spark of fire and purpose in the radiant face of the Scot.

"And then—?" Klein suggested.

"Well, it was easy to pin him after that, Solly—he just faded into place. You remember, don't you, how I waited ten, fifteen—nearly twenty minutes for him to show for the second bout? And how the announcer comes trippin' out and says the Turk's left arm was out o' joint—and he was through?"

Klein clapped his hands and shouted joyously.

"And why—why not again—and again—for years more, Sandy?"

The big fellow paused and looked down abashed.

"Oh, Solly," he cried, "this here is only a' imitation ring in the snow—and it's all over, my boy. I can't never come back again—never!"

Taking him by the arm, Klein started toward the cabin with the grappler and as the manager prepared the evening meal, McLeon sat dejectedly with his head in his hands.

"Read that!" Klein cried, after the supper was over—and he thrust into the hands of the grappler the issues of the papers that he had been holding for that day and hour.

Slowly, carefully, painfully, the big man spelled out the terrible criticism. The glow from the wood fire showed a still deeper crimson in his cheeks.

Finally he arose—and then crumpling the papers, he cast them into the flames.

"They said that o' me—o' me, Solly? The dogs—the mongrel curs—They said I was dead—rotten—done for!"

He clenched his fists and raised his arms above his head. Pacing rapidly to and fro across the cabin floor, he cursed both fearfully and long.

At length panting, worn out, he sat down and mopped his beady brow.

"Solly," he finally managed to say. "I guess it was true. The booze is out o' me, boy, but I need the right kind of work. Most of all I need to know that I can come back—that I'm a man again like I used to be when we always pulled down the winner's end.

"I didn't know, Solly, that you had really stuck to me this way, blowed your own cush when I was a losin' game—stuck when you could o' had the champion himself under your wing and—why?"

Klein sprang to his feet and stood before the grappler.

"Why—did you ask *why*? Man—I watched you like a mammy watches her little kid. I taught you to talk in the language of the mat—I worked those coarse muscles into shape and form and class. I matched you with care and judgment. I found you, Sandy—that's it—I found you, and I built that great temple you call your body—and by the powers, Sandy, I'll build it again and I'll take you back and we'll show the bunch where you stand!"

And as he talked, he detected the old fire again in the grappler's soul. He caught the reflection from the grate-fire on Sandy's face and knew that the giant Scot was dreaming the dreams of the big arena—when every throat was calling his name.

By intent—through the workings of a plot that had formulated itself the night that Klein had half dragged, half pushed the drunken grappler from his disgrace, the men had moved in an orbit—and each step, each day's recreation had been carefully planned.

At a point where the Rapid River flows into the deeper waters of the Black, the woodsmen of the great forest had assembled to help the last drive go through.

It was early spring, and for days the dull roar of dynamite blasts and breaking ice had come from up the Rapid. The first stray, outlaw logs had found their way along the boom.

The clans of the Northland were there—Swedes, broad of shoulder and deep of chest—blond and chattering; dark-visaged French-Canadians, injured to the miasma and exposure of the

river; Irish, red of top and sinewy of limb—all manner of hardy men that are bred and have been reared in the timber reaches.

The event was one of the greatest the age-old forest would ever witness—for not only was it the final drive to come down the Rapid and enter the Black—but it was to be the meeting point of decision for the bullies of the camps.

Word had already come forward of the giant Frenchman, Jean Valez, who had crushed into humiliating defeat every adversary who had contested honors with him.

Klein had mentioned this casually to McLeon, and he had chuckled inwardly as he noted the purposeful expression that came over the big fellow—the determined set to those huge, heavy jaws, the flexing of those long, tough muscles.

For more than a month after Klein had found the answering purpose that evening when Sandy had drawn the diagram of the mat in the snow, Solomon had systematically trained him—had rubbed the tender flesh into response, had forced McLeon to run miles over the worn corduroy roads.

His weight, as Klein had determined not half an hour before, was exactly two hundred and ten in his clothes; this would approximate one hundred and ninety-five ring weight—within five pounds of the old grappling form.

The gates were closed, and it would take several days before the water would back up sufficiently to permit the scouting parties to get all of the vagrant logs back into the current; in the interim, there would be drinking and carousing and fighting—always with a weather eye for the moment that Jean Valez would declare himself. For declare himself he must. Tradition demanded it.

There was a tense feeling in the air—an atmosphere of expectancy, for there were on hand many of the gladiators of calk and fist who hoped a champion would arise to wrest honors from the brutal Frenchman.

In all the fights in which he had participated, no mercy had been proffered, the under dog: the iron calks on the

shoes of the bully had ground many features into unrecognizable pulp.

Piecemeal, McLeon garnered these facts—and within his brain a revolution was in progress.

He was interested at first; then he was anxious—fretting like a horse in the paddock awaiting the bugle call.

It was late in the afternoon of the third day that Valez came—towering above all the others, a giant six-feet-five, with shoulders that carried one's mind back to the legends of Atlas. He had flowing mustaches and a bristling beard. He was gruff, morose, short-spoken. The others shrank away from him in fear. In his presence the hardy residents of the north-wood lapsed into shivering silence and spoke patronizingly—laughing inordinately at his merest attempt at jest, and even at his insolent remarks.

An old bunk-house had been converted into a bar-room for the occasion, and pike-poles and cant-hooks were lined up against the exterior while the men lounged, drank and gossiped. Jean Valez was the absorbing topic of conversation, transcending even the farewell to the logging days on the Rapid and the Black.

Klein and McLeon edged into the bar-room with the rest, for word had gone forward that Valez was buying the drinks—as became a great bully when impressing his subjects with his might.

Klein noticed that through intent, Sandy kept as close to the big man as politeness justified; when the invitation went forth, they were brushing elbows at the rough boards, placed on saw-horses, to fulfill the functions of a bar.

On boxes against the wall, arranged in haphazard fashion, were jugs and bottles—all of one brand, the red liquor of the woods.

"Fellows," said the bully, "ze drink is on me. All drink with cheer for I wish to have—well, exercise—a little later, gentlemen—a little later."

Tin cups were filled to the brim with the vile poison and were set before the men.

Looking down the length of the improvised bar to see that every man was "set," the Frenchman raised his cup on

high and said, "Ze toast, friends, is to me—ze greatest fightair of ze wood. Drink!"

One tin cup still remained on the boards—the cup before McLeon.

"What!" roared the French fighter—"what! You refuse to drink to—to drink to *me*!"

"Why should I drink to a bum frog-eater like you?" queried McLeon.

"What—say it again—what?"

The bully loomed menacingly above the carrot-dome of the grappler, and Sandy laughed aloud. Taking one of his mittens, he slapped the Frenchman over the mouth—a ringing, stinging slap.

"Now, you black false-alarm—fight!"

The men moved back toward the walls, as was their wont; and only their harsh breathing told of the pent-up feelings of the mob.

Under the swarthy skin of the giant, a purple fury glowed. He cast his coat aside; McLeon did the same.

Standing about five paces back, the Frenchman sprang forward, and came thundering over the rough floor toward Sandy.

The Frenchman's right arm was extended and his fingers were claspings and opening convulsively.

At that moment, the lithe figure of the grappler underwent an evolution. An iron grip fastened on the outstretched wrist, there was a sudden turn, a sort of dipping motion toward the floor, and the Frenchman came headforemost over the crouched form of the wrestler—and the massive black dome struck on the splintered planks.

A scarlet stream spurted from between the bully's eyebrows, and he spat furiously.

And at that moment another thing, wonderful in all the world of timberland experience, took place.

The Frenchman's legs were being lifted aloft. The dangerous calked soles pointed toward the ceiling!

For a moment, a brief interval, Sandy balanced his man. Then he slipped his own left arm under the left arm of the Frenchman—and back over the bully's thick neck.

In the parlance of the mat, Sandy had a crotch and half-Nelson.

Then the three hundred pounds of backwood's beef started to rise—slowly, but ever up. His struggles were futile—his curses brought forth no comment from the grappler—he was helpless, isolated from all leverage—despoiled of his titanic strength.

At length, possibly ten seconds after the lifting process began, Sandy held the Frenchman on high and then rushed toward the opposite wall.

There was a dull crash—and some of the boards tore loose from the corroded nails and fell outward into the snow.

Five times he repeated this assault and each time a new rivulet of red trickled down the bully's face. It was spattered on the floor, it stained the bar, it stood out in brilliant viscid blotches on the wall.

Still holding his man above his head, Sandy poised him a second and then released his grip.

The bruised mass struck the floor; the Frenchman was on his hands and knees but he was not cursing now—just gurgling and spitting violently.

Pouncing upon the prostrate form like a panther, Sandy came almost in front of him, then slipped his left arm under the Frenchman's right and up over the back of the dark bull neck—clenching his hands with the fingers interlocked after the manner of a chain and pressing the Frenchman's head into his breast.

This hold, the bar-Nelson—dangerous to wind and spirit alike—soon took the remaining game and steam out of the bully.

For ten minutes McLeon held him thus: finally the great form curled up, gave way, and the giant fell face-downward.

Loosening his grip, Sandy waited until he saw signs of returning consciousness. Then he straightened the fighter to a sitting posture and the red, swollen eyes blinked in wonderment—with a strange deep light of fear and capitulation showing in them.

Sandy advanced and twice he slapped the blotched, bleeding face. The Frenchman winced and whined and crawled back.

"Now, you big imitation," said Sandy, "are yo' licked—or do you want more?"

Feebly—scarcely audible—came the voice of the victim.

"Enough—for ze sake of ze great Lady—enough!"

"Now," said Sandy, "get up and buy the boys a drink and don't object when a gentleman is present who don't care nothin' for the booze."

The vanquished fighter arose to his feet, and extended his right hand. Sandy shook it.

"And now, fellows—there aint no more bully—just like there aint no more drive. My little pal and me's goin back. So-long and happy luck—and, Frenchie, be a good little girl!"

As the pair walked through the door, every hat was doffed, for the fighters of the north woods had seen a style of battling that was new and terrible to them and they felt only compassion for the weak and humbled shape that tried to be cordial in a genuinely cordial manner.

As they plodded the trail toward Sawpit, Klein whistled, "Put It Over the Pan, McGann," and Sandy lifted his face toward the south and inhaled lungfuls of the hearty breath of the infant Spring.

"Solly," said he, "Solly, boy—you built up that Temple like you said—and that Missouri farm—why, there aint nothin' to it, Solly!"

And the little manager laughed and cried alternately, while the booming of the dynamite in the river became farther removed and fainter and the evening star shone bright and clear overhead—the same star that had looked down on that other Temple the night when Solomon fashioned his brand new blue prints.



The Luck of "43"

By PAUL CRISSEY

IN SPITE of Hanley's youthful appearance he had been on the force for eight years, and even Tom, the big, black, station cat, felt that he had a right to the same pride which throbbed in Hanley's blood. This undoubtedly was because both the cat and the fireman were all that remained of the old crew who had first inhabited station house 43; all the rest of those boys except Angus, McNealy and Falton had left the service. These three exceptions had also left the service—and widows as well! In all of the city's fire department history no company had scored as many fatalities as "43" and even the engine house itself had burned one night—taking into smoke and ashes two of the best half Arabians that ever pulled fire-fighting apparatus. After that most of the boys were transferred, some resigned—anything to rid themselves of the hoodoo of "43."

Hanley stayed—and in all the long eight years of that service, only accidents and not a fatality, had occurred.

"Wait," said Hanley one day when the story of the old crew's hard luck was afloat. "Just wait till somebody steps in here and breaks it all up. I've seen hard luck work before and if I aint awfully mistaken we'll get all that's coming to us for eight years, and get it all in a lump, too!" He shook his head ominously and bent over the brass hub-cap he was polishing.

"Buck" Chambers, who handled the lines of the engine, smiled sarcastically.

"Cheerful for us!" he grinned, "to have to collect all that's been coming for eight years aint as light as it might be.

I'd rather have my luck on the installment plan, if that's going to be the rule." Hanley laid down the brass cup.

"I've seen it work," he said slowly, "too many times not to know when it's comin'." He looked out between the big double doors to where the sidewalk glistened in the sun, wet from a rinsing from the hose.

"It was only a kind of a hunch," he continued slowly, "that McNealy had before he went. Ugh! but that was ugly. He knew for ten minutes that there wasn't a thing he could do—then when the time came he just stepped up into it. I never seen so many flames in my life and they gobbled him up like he was a snowball in hell." With this vivid picture before him, Hanley slipped away to the stalls at the rear of the room, and fed Nellie a square of sugar.

"She sent 'em to you," he whispered half-sheepishly in the horse's ear and Nellie whinnied a soft reply. Somehow Nellie, big and white and reliable, seemed to understand Hanley and his troubles and the two had many long talks together. Hanley muttered his troubles in her ear and she whinnied her wants back to him—and she usually got what she wanted.

"There's bad luck a-comin', Nellie," Hanley whispered. "I can feel it in my bones. It's the old bad luck of '43' coming' round for its visit. I wonder what'll start it off." And Hanley kept wondering about this until Friday, the thirteenth, when he looked up from his position under the fire patrol and met the gaze of a pair of cold, gray eyes which burned above a thin lip and flat-

tened nostrils. Then Hanley, the eight-year man, knew that the bad luck of "43" had returned.

He made no effort to greet the man—only lay still on the floor and stared at him.

"Where's the captain?" asked the man sullenly.

"I'm it," replied Hanley, and he wormed his way out from under the wagon and laid his tools on the bench. "What do you want?" He knew well enough, but he would have to recognize formalities before his superstitions.

"I've been transferred," growled the big man with the gray eyes. "My name's Bartell from Truck 13."

"Why did they send you here—from '13'?"—cursing softly as he waited the answer.

"I asked them to," was the answer and an ugly warmth came into his cold eyes.

"Aw, come out with it," growled Hanley. "There's no use to be beatin' around the bush with me. Headquarters aint sendin' us men like you without some reason. Now what is it?"

"You got the truth," sharply answered Bartell and he leaned aggressively up against the engine.

"Did you want to get on here—on '43'—the bad luck battalion?"

"Sure."

"Why?" Hanley's voice reached a sharp pitch. There was something familiar about the man—yet he could not place him definitely.

A gust of laughter came in the window from the alley where the crew were pitching horse-shoes. The instrument near the door began to click nervously and the tension between the two men was intensified. The barn was empty except for themselves. Hanley took a step nearer and his voice dropped to a comprehending tone.

"Who are you after?" he asked calmly and the stillness which followed the question was only broken by the stamping of the horses in the rear and the busier click and rattle of the instrument. A long-drawn buzz, a silence, then the continued rattle again and Bartell stared into the face of Hanley.

"I'm after you," he said slowly, "only you—see!"

"And because—I!"

"Because of the lady—the widow. Ah! I see you know who I mean well enough. Well, do you know the whole story, the rest of it? I—"

"There goes the double K—they're callin' us," cried a voice from the alley window and slowly Hanley changed from a man with an enemy to a fireman again.

"I'll be near you," growled Bartell. "I'll be near you and I'll get you—"

"You'll have plenty of chances," snapped Hanley. "There's a call comin' in. I'll have to see you later, Mr. Bartell."

Quickly he stepped to the instrument desk. A bell jangled and Hanley took down the receiver. The voice of the operator in the City Hall droned wearily over the fire.

"Big fruit warehouse on the river near the depot. Keep close about and stand ready—we make it 4-11."

Hanley hung up the receiver and turned to say something to the new man but he had wandered over to the window.

"In love with the widow too, eh?" he whispered to himself, then added—"well, you'll have to go some."

Indeed, as he bent over the instrument table his heart hardened a trifle as he thought of the long, weary, three years he had courted the prim little lady across the river in the north side boarding house, and as he thought of the lonesomeness of those past years, queer lines contracted about his lips. His face was clean-shaven, strong and square of jaw, and the light in his eye gleamed blue and defiant upon all obstacles.

"Eight years in the service and three years—in love," he whispered to himself and his hand trembled on the sensitive key before him. Then suddenly the premonition of bad luck for number "43" cast its superstitious shadow over him and, try as he might, he could not shake off the feeling that there was danger in the day for his company. As for any personal danger to himself, Hanley did not give a toss of a helmet, but for old "43," the great dread of years seemed to be waiting, listening for the signal to spring upon his faithful crew and wipe them from the face of

the earth. As for himself, he assured the unresponsive table before him that he did not care—Bartell could be attended to later. He bent closely over the instruments, reading their metallic voices as readily as if the words were spoken instead of spelled in a code and abbreviated.

Click—clickity—click—click—click—click—clickity—click — click—click—dash—dot—dot—dash—dot—dot—dot—dash—dot—dot—dot! The story of the fire was coming in. A big coal yard on the north branch of the river had been ignited and the flames had spread over the dry buildings until all superstructures, loaders and conveyors were in a mass of flames. Great warehouses towered on either side and streaks of smoke and soot marked their sides where the hungry, lapping flames from the coal yard had seared their sides. Sticks and burning particles from the dock conveyors were splashing into the dirty water of the river, hissing, steaming, then subsiding into blackened, charred lumps as they went down stream on the sluggish current.

The railroad yard had been blocked for an hour and streams of irate passengers tramped wearily, fretfully, over the rails and ties and leads of hose to the platforms, from which havens of refuge they soon lost themselves in the haze of the smoky city.

The fire-boat played a single stream of tepid water upon the great, single-leaf, jack-knife bridge, and the smoking ties found no chance to break into flames. The bridge was a mammoth hulk of steel, concrete and cogs; its great, finger-like leaf reached up into the sky with a massive grace, its outermost edge almost scraping the flimsy walls of a huge fruit warehouse. Time after time, day after day, as the free end of the gigantic single-leaf raised its bulk into the sky and a pigmy-like boat shot down stream beneath, a man seated on the tip of that great steel finger might have looked through the dusty, dirty-laden windows of the old warehouse—at heaps of straw, at the corpse-like forms of bananas hanging in shroud-like bags from the ceilings and at tier upon tier of orange boxes filled with their fragrant, golden fruit.

When the riveters were building the great bridge they often saw these things and when the big leaf of the bridge was lowered to a certain position they could almost touch the walls of the warehouse with their hands as they worked. It was an ugly, forbidding building which gave them an odd, uncanny feeling and they had no impulse to attempt to touch it.

Marshal O'Day stumbled across the slippery planks of the bridge, dodged the stream from the fire-boat and stood, panting, beside his light buggy.

"Get to the box and call about three more engines," he ordered. "That warehouse is going to go." Then he turned abruptly and retraced his steps across the bridge while his lieutenant hurried to the nearest alarm box and sent in his order.

So it was that one minute and ten seconds later, engine company No. "43" clattered down the approach from their house and swung out upon the smooth asphalt with Captain Hanley rubbing shoulders with the new transfer, Bartell, in the patrol.

Nellie settled into the harness between the two blacks and the hissing, shining thing behind them rolled along smoothly coughing smoke and spitting hot cinders as it flew. Hanley felt for his helmet under the seat, pushed it sullenly over his head and stared unseeingly at the figure with the cruel gray eyes before him. At River Street they swung into a muddy stretch of street and the heavy, gaseous smoke from the coal-fire hit upon the lungs of the crew like a stifling blanket.

Hanley judged the distance, cleared the end of the hose in the bottom of the wagon, and signaled the man on the end seat to jump with it. The panting horses stopped, a long line of hose reeled out through the mud and water and stretched up to the dimmed windows of the old fruit warehouse, where, through the dingy panes, one could see a dull red glow under a heavy pall of white smoke.

A shattering clash of glass, a shout and a signal, and the lines of hose writhed and twisted and shot forth their avalanche of water into the piles of matted hay and packing-straw.

Urged by some blind impulse, Captain

Hanley, of "43," ordered a line to the second floor of the fruit warehouse.

"What the devil is that for?" roared the marshal in his ear.

Between the steady throb of the pumping engines and the shrill shrieks for coal, Hanley answered:

"We can get hold on that big brick building there if we can get a stream in above the big shutters. She's afire in the first floor."

"Throw up the shutters then," cried the marshal, exasperated.

"Then she'll go up with the draft below—give me my way and some men with a lead on the second floor of this warehouse and we'll do the work."

He turned his back and gave his orders. Once he thought he saw a sneer on the face of the new man, Bartell, and he was instantly torn with a great rage. Why had the fellow grinned at him? Did he think that he, Hanley, was afraid?

The thought no sooner entered his head than he sprang for the low doorway of the rickety old fruit storehouse and stumbled up the villainous stairs, following the bloated hose. A great, dim curtain of white smoke from the burning hay filled the loft on the second floor where the line of piping terminated in a group of three men in a window.

They were crouched upon the nozzle, steadying its aim across the narrow court to the brick building next door.

Hanley sniffed suspiciously.

"I don't like it," he muttered to himself. "It's getting too thick." And as a matter of fact, since he had entered the room the smoke had more than doubled in density.

"The luck of '43!" he muttered as he crossed the floor. The smoke was smarting in his eyes and already they were ringed with the red line of irritation. Hanley wanted a little air.

He pushed close to the window and stuck his head out gratefully. A sullen growl came from one of the men at the nozzle in the window. Hanley looked down. Here was the man who had challenged him, dared him.

"Now, we'll play the game," he muttered to himself. "We'll play it hard—against the bad luck of '43.'"

"Why don't it get clear in here?" said

the pipeman. "They can't be playin' much on the floor below us."

"Ought to have had that all out an hour ago," answered Hanley quietly. Then—"Go down and tell them to play on the floor below. We don't want to smother." He knelt down beside the big Bartell.

The stream hissed from the nozzle which was pressed against the window casing and hurled itself in a fringed stream across the court-way where it splashed upon the hot, steaming bricks of the wall. Below, alongside, lay the river and the bridge with its great finger nearly touching the wall.

Bartell's eyes were upon the building opposite and lines of blood began to trace themselves in tiny lacework on his eyeballs. Hanley eyed him curiously. Behind them, unnoticed, great balls of white, suffocating smoke rolled up from the floor below. Finally the muscles of Hanley's jaws bunched tightly and his hold on the pipe strengthened.

"What were you saying about the—the widow back yonder?" His voice was steady, almost noticeably so and the words fell dully upon the smoke-deadened atmosphere.

The new man, Bartell, rested his weight more heavily upon the nozzle and turned a contorted face full of hate upon his captain.

"You're having too damned much to do with her." He uttered the words significantly and emphatically.

A sudden, hot flush of anger stained Hanley's face and his teeth gritted impetuously together.

"Go on!"

"Just don't do it any more," continued Bartell arrogantly. "I've been waiting to get a good chance to tell you—now you know."

Hanley's lips curled in scorn.

"And what business is it of yours?" he asked.

"She's my wife," gasped the new man, pushing his head out of the window for more air.

"Your wife!" stammered Hanley. "She's got no husband. He's dead—been dead for four years."

The other pipeman passed a grimy hand over his smoke blackened face. The flames in the floor had tackled the

wood and with cheery little crackles were mounting the walls toward the men on the second floor.

"No, he hasn't," the man returned slowly, "'cause I'm him and I aint dead. I've been laying low these years trying to get ahead a little. Now I have, and I can see her."

Captain Hanley's eyes blazed.

"You pup!" he cried. "You aint any more business living here on earth with human beings than a rat has in a palace. You been loafing all these years while that little woman scraped and fought and worked and was happy because she thought you were dead. Now that she's got something put away you're going to come back to life and help to share what she's saved." His voice rose in a dull roar and the muscles in his hands knotted with the tenseness of his despair. From somewhere came the queer, mysterious odor of burning fruit—a strange smell—and Bartell looked down. The ground was hidden from view by a thick cloud of smoke and, as the two men watched, one the other, and the other the smoke, the water in their hose died down to a tiny stream and then the flow stopped entirely.

"They've cut us off," whispered Bartell, half consciously. The smoke was getting very thick and the big form of Captain Hanley bending over him seemed to shut away what little air and light there was.

"I'm going to give you the damnedest beating you ever had in your life," said Hanley coolly, and his strong fingers closed firmly and surely about the rubber collar of the man by the window. One powerful swoop and he sprawled on the floor. A great cloud of smoke choked him and each tiny crack of the floor was a veritable volcano, rapidly supplying more. With a dogged determination not to be cheated, Hanley picked up the figure from the floor and stood it on a pair of tottering feet and limbs.

"The next time, if there is any, you come to life about four years sooner!" He drew back his fist and was about to let drive into the ashy-hued face of the fireman before him, when a cry escaped from the man's trembling lips.

"The floor!—Look out!" Hanley

turned swiftly. All of the far end of the room was sinking. The floor supports had been eaten away and the great planks were slowly sinking into a bed of flames. Even as he stared, the last tremblings shook the portion on which he was standing—he had only time to yell:

"The stairs—quick!" Then the whole floor collapsed and he found himself panting and climbing blindly for the floor above. Gratefully he sank upon the next floor only to be awakened by a sharp fall. He looked up to behold the weakened form of the pipeman, Bartell, who had followed, blindly, to momentary safety.

He growled hatefully, and caught at the bulky figure before him. "The luck of '43,'" he whispered again and again and then he thought of that cyclone of flames which had caught McNealy eight years before.

"We—gotta—get—higher!" muttered Bartell weakly, for the smoke had reached his lungs and his throat was parched and dry.

Suddenly another sickening lurch shook the building. "The floor again!" shrieked Bartell, and with his hand over his mouth Hanley looked down upon the figure sprawled before him.

"I'm going to see you die," he announced suddenly. "Then I'll know you're dead this time." He groaned, and picking up Bartell, staggered to the fourth floor with him.

How long would it last? There were only two more floors above him—then the roof! Why hadn't they jumped from the second floor? It would have been easy—now it was four floors downward. He put his eye to the cracked floor. All he could see was a mass of flames reaching hungrily up for the floor they were on. Then he saw the dirty window and staggered over to it. Four blows with his calloused fist and the frame was bare of glass. The higher air was purer and at the first gush of it Bartell staggered thankfully to his feet. Together they peered over the casement and blinked the smoke from their eyes.

Four floors from the ground with a bottomless pit of fire below them—a sheer wall, no fire escapes, and no ladders!

"You're playing in the luck of '43' now," volunteered Hanley.

"Can't we get out?" asked the other man stupidly, gazing down at the great bridge which spanned the river.

Hanley chuckled wickedly. "I don't see how, do you?"

The man by his side rubbed a big, blue bruise where Hanley's knuckles had met the cheek-bone. Hanley winced.

"If—if they run up a ladder—or a bridge—or something to drink—" muttered Bartell drunkenly; then he slumped to a still heap on the floor. Hanley watched him for a moment. "What foolish babbling: 'a ladder, a drink, a bridge'—a bridge!"

Somehow Hanley couldn't get by that last word. "The bridge! The bridge. What if it should—" he paused. He could try—it wouldn't hurt to try. Quick! How could he let them know?—It was too far to make them hear! He looked back into the room. Already the smoke was filling it up, and even a few tiny flames were licking eagerly at the straw on the floor. How could he attract attention below? Eagerly Hanley looked about. Now that there was a chance for life he was all eagerness.

Frantically he grabbed big bunches of ripening bananas and ran to the window with them. One, two, three, he dropped and the fourth one splashed in the river alongside the fire-boat. He saw the pipe-man wave to the captain and then he saw the whole crew gazing up. They knew—but he still had to tell them about the bridge. He must hurry, for already the bales of packing were on fire and the floor was in flames in a dozen places. To get the message to those below—that was the problem!

At last he had an inspiration. Eagerly he searched the floor for a nail or something hard and at last wrenched one from an orange box. Then he hastily scratched the word "Bridge" on his hel-

met, emptied a case of oranges, substituted his helmet, and then threw the odd package out of the window. He watched it as it turned slowly in the air and as it splashed into the ember-sown river.

He saw the crew pick it up—then he could see no more, for a great cloud of smoke and dust shot out over the river and hid the boat from his sight, driving him back from the ledge.

"They'll have to hurry," he muttered, and stumbled blindly to the window again. Then he was tortured with the thought that he should have failed to make his instructions, his appeal, more definite.

"They must have understood," he muttered.

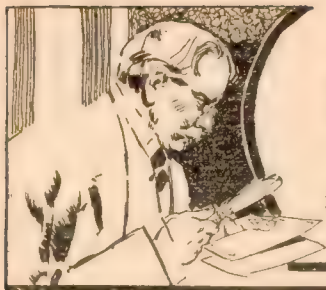
And they did!

Four minutes later Hanley hurriedly pushed out a plank across from the window ledge to the great steel bulk which had risen in the haze below. Crawling slowly with the unconscious form of Bartell upon his shoulders, he made his way to the uppermost peak of the single-leaf bridge. And the next moment the smoothly-moving bridge-finger was slowly and steadily lowered, bearing with it the two firemen to safety.

When, a little while afterward, they had both been placed comfortably in the ambulance. Bartell turned slowly on his side and stretched out a scorched hand to meet Hanley's.

"You're a brick, old man," he said huskily. "And I'll treat the little woman better."

"Then the luck of '43' will be good," answered Hanley. "I guess it's better to know you're alive, than to be in doubt about your death." He turned wearily over on his back and fell to wondering if McNealy, dead eight years before, had been looking for him this day over in the Great Beyond, only to be disappointed.



The Deeper Metal

By
DOROTHY H. BRODHEAD



IT WAS at the moment when Rathburne judged all monotonous interruptions at an end that the vital, glory-clad intrusion gleamed like a searchlight across his somber, steady course, illuminating it—for a second. Life has a habit of dealing out surprises at the most unexpected times.

He was decidedly conscious of the journey behind him, and he had come directly from the depot to give himself the benefit of every minute obtainable for careful, searching work. He had expected to be obliged to telephone to the assistant postmaster; then, wait until the latter could bring the keys, but fortune had brought them face to face in the postoffice lobby, and he had received the keys without five minutes' delay. Remington, the money-order-clerk, had finished closing his books, and gone. Rathbone remembered that he had passed him while he was waiting for the fat, puffy assistant to unlock the door. The latter had completed a half-dozen amiable entrances and exits for the purpose of giving as many bits of trifling information, and, finally, taken himself off in his limousine. The chief night clerk had entered with a key to the inspector's private office which he said Mr. Jadwell had left in case he, Rathburne, cared to go up. At last, Rathburne found himself alone, with the minute-hand on the tower-clock, across the square, just trembling on the quarter-hour mark, while his impatient senses were reminded that after all his haste and inconvenience, he must needs wait until it should crawl to the half-hour line before he could commence his work.

He carefully pulled Jadwell's letter from his traveling case, and whimsically re-read it:

J. Brutus Rathburne,
Chief Inspector at Headquarters.

DEAR SIR:

I understand that you are to come to Williamsport next week to appear against Hanlon in Federal Court there. When you have finished, if you have a little time to spare, I would be glad of any help you can give me in "landing" a case of fraud in this office. It is in the money-order department where Jay Remington—you will remember, he was in Washington—is chief.

If you can favor me, come on at your own convenience. I expect to be in the city permanently, and can work with you. However, if I should be called out of town between now and then, I will leave my key so that you can make free use of my office. Of course, the only time obtainable for use of the money-order books is after 9:30 P. M. Money-order business closes at 9.

Hoping you can favor me, I remain,
very truly yours,

CURTIS C. JADWELL.

He folded the letter, replaced it, and, closing the case with a snap, remained standing over it, his long fingers still worrying the clasp reflectively. It was foolish to wait until nine-thirty now that Remington had gone, he told himself, but he would take no chances on a case in another man's district.

He glanced impatiently out of the window at the tower clock, and mused again. Jay Remington, of all men! He who in Washington had been called his, Rathburne's, counterpart. He glanced involuntarily into a full-length mirror across the room, and knew that he did not appear a day over twenty-five years; and Remington *was* not more than

twenty-five. Still if this work he had come for, proved successful, Remington would go to Fort Leavenworth for five long years, at least.

Rathburne roused himself and recrossed the room, preparing to smoke away the monotony of the impatient ten minutes before him. He settled dejectedly into a standing position, leaning idly against a table for support, his hands delved deep into his wide coat-pockets, his meerschaum held firmly in a corner of his clean-shaven, full-lipped mouth.

Then, something gleaming, brilliant, fluttered in the doorway, and the man suddenly drew himself to his full, towering, height and removed the meerschaum. There was no hint of surprise or curiosity in his face, a mere suggestion of interest, slightly tinged with annoyance, in his manner as he gazed frankly at the girl, hesitant, doubtful, before him. Instantly, an impression of her, as vivid as it was unmistakable, drove inward to his brain and remained indelibly stamped there: the Golden Girl. When he observed her more closely, he found that she filled the first conception in every visible detail. Her hair, coiled girlishly against her neck, was red-gold, after the shade of bronze; the French broadcloth evening-wrap she wore was champagne in tint, ornamented with little ropes of amber beads; even her eyes, smiling a recognition from beneath lashes burnished in the feeble glow of the gas-jet above her head, were, in color, more gold than brown.

There was a moment's embarrassing silence while the girl gazed questioningly into the uncertain light. Then, she spoke impulsively, her voice warmly convincing in its question. "Shall you mind if I wait here, just a few minutes, until Mr. Jadwell comes for me?"

He was still puzzled at her presence, but the name she had used told him perfectly who she was. "Certainly not," he assured her readily, placing a revolving chair that he had drawn from its place at the desk.

She accepted it graciously, unfastening and throwing back the folds of her long cape. The man noted, with a spark of interest, that the rich, shimmering

evening gown beneath was yellow, and the only ornament that she wore, appeared to be a cluster of topaz at her throat.

"I'm glad I found you here; I've been wanting to see you," she said. Then, by way of an explanation: "Mr. Jadwell promised to take me to the Charity Ball at the Country Club this evening, but he left town on business this morning, and found that he could not possibly get back before the nine-thirty train to-night. So, to save time, I dressed and came down in the auto, then sent the chauffeur on to the station for him. I wanted to come here anyway, and I thought he could save time by going to his club and getting ready, then stopping here for me. We live so far out of town this year."

The man nodded, while his mind, trained to observe the minor details, leaped behind her words to a comprehension of their meaning. Jadwell was out of town for one day, on business. That told him that Jadwell was working on the big theft case at Montrose, an adequate reason for his willingness to put the supposed smaller case in other hands. Perhaps, in competent management, this would not be the smaller case. An added impatience seized him to be alone with the books that might tell their tale—if his mind was clever enough to understand it. He felt a sudden annoyance at her presence, but he rejoined—"I'm sure I'm honored."

"Well, as I said, I've been wanting to see you, and this seemed a good opportunity."

She leaned forward nervously, her little hands, from which she had stripped the long gloves, fluttering like butterflies among the pens and ink and blotters upon the desk. To the man, her extreme, thoroughly natural girlishness was intensely amusing.

"I reasoned you would stay a little while to fix up accounts. I knew you must do it at this time," she said.

"Yes," he nodded, only half understanding.

"You see, I knew you would do it," she proceeded. "That is what I wanted to speak of—Curtis—I mean Mr. Jadwell—knows it, too." Her sentences halted; then plunged hurriedly, impul-

sively on. "I'll tell you how I found out so easily. The winter before Mr. Jadwell and I were married, was so intolerably lonesome—it was right after my father's death, so I didn't feel like going into society, and I had no friends here and Mr. Jadwell was busy—that I just naturally took up with government work to keep from getting lonesome. That same winter, Mr. Glad, the chief money-order clerk at that time, was taken ill, and, for some reason, his assistant was incompetent. I found myself pretty well trained to fill the position and, of course, it was a great relief to Mr. Jadwell and the postmaster to have some one here whom they could trust. As a result of those three weeks, they let me stay here, well, there is nothing about this money-order business that I haven't learned to understand. That is the reason Mr. Jadwell came to me last month and told me that something was wrong here. He suggested that I could aid him by trying to locate it. I worked three nights on your books, and I have not told any one about it, but I found it. It's very easiness made it difficult."

She pulled a scrap of paper from her glove. "Don't," she implored, as he seemed about to interrupt. "Let me finish; then, see if I'm not right. Page eight, section one, in your cash-book, shows the first signs of tampering; again, on page eighteen, section three, the same thing is repeated. There are a dozen such entries, since. Once understand them, and you can't miss them. I'll admit, you are clever, and you've shown me that it can be made to pay, in one way at least, to be chief money-order clerk at a depository office. Juggling with the figures wouldn't have seemed so bad, though," she added, reproachfully, "if you hadn't been trusted so."

The man leaned forward, a dull flush deepening the bronze of his features. "You believe," he asked, evenly, "that I did that?"

"I don't want to believe it." Resistance to such a belief was dominant in her eyes. "As it is, Mr. Remington," she said. "I know it."

He stared thoughtfully out of the window. Whether they were correct or

otherwise, he was in possession of vital facts, meant exclusively for the man he was playing against. His mind leaped to close about a question: even though he was Remington's counterpart, and the light in the room, purposely dim, might aid a mistake in identity—why in the world did the girl come to Remington with such a matter if she did not know him to a surety? Perhaps, if he understood her purpose, he would know better how to make the necessary explanation. He turned abruptly:

"When did you have charge of the money-order business here?"

"A little more than a year ago. It was the winter before we were married." She hesitated, then continued gently. "My father was an invalid, you see, and I was with him continually until he died. He left Mr. Jadwell in charge of my affairs—I was only seventeen—and, after his death, Mr. Jadwell persuaded me to come here instead of joining a distant relative, as I had intended. He brought me to his people. We were married the following summer."

He nodded. He suddenly recollected that he had heard a great deal, at the time, of Jadwell's marriage. He also remembered that decidedly conscientious wives of elderly government officials had given decided opinions not wholly favorable to Jadwell. Not that he was not the brainiest, most successful inspector who had ever served in the swift-working, foreign-populated, money-making coal regions, but he was, at the time, a developed business and society man of thirty, with all the average things behind him that mark the life of the average man, and, she, they had said, was but a slip of a girl, unacquainted with the world, but with beauty enough to have given Jadwell a stiff battle if he had waited to compete with the chances Time would have given her. The man had never given the matter any consideration heretofore. Now with the glorious, dazzling presence of the girl before him, simply, unaffectedly telling him of her life, without reference to the salient fact that it had utterly excluded the opportunity of knowing men, he hated Jadwell for the advantage he had taken.

But he forced himself to greet her information pleasantly, nonchalantly. "I remember," he said, "I was in Washington, and I heard the particulars. You know, Mr. Jadwell is one of our cleverest and best known inspectors."

"Oh, do you think so?" Her voice brimmed with pleasure that was undoubtedly genuine. Then, she grew serious. "But I came to speak of the other matter. I'm dreadfully afraid you will think I'm not quite true to Curtis to come and warn you of this. He tells me that I'm too impulsive, and that that is the reason I blunder so often, but I reasoned that all out before I came. It isn't a case he is counting on so very much—I made sure of that or I should not have come—and he won't be dreadfully disappointed at losing it, and if I had told him the way I feel about these things he would not have understood. *He never does understand.* But I know this detective game so well. It's 'square,' scrupulously square, but I think there may sometimes be things which we don't realize. Suppose a man gets started wrong, or, just naturally, don't have any luck. They track him down just the same, and wait until they have collected enough evidence to ruin him; then they close in, and he is caught like a trapped animal, with no chance for any future, or any luck. I know circumstances are tightening around you, and somehow, I don't want you to be caught."

Rathburne leaned forward, wholly interested, his lips tightened into a grim smile of amusement at the thought that she, the most pliant, governable thing beneath Jadwell's authority, was, unintentionally, out of her sheer bubbling girlhood, effectually resisting a power which he judged to be as hard with her as with everything else that Jadwell ever controlled.

The girl talked on. "Curtis spoke of you so often that I felt as though I should like you even before I saw you. Then, when you came out of the opera that night and accepted his invitation to ride up in our carriage—well, it wasn't your appearance, because it was so dark, I didn't even see you, at least not clearly, but your manner was so

genuine and boyish that—well, I liked you so! I thought, just this once, it might be pardonable to take a hand in the game myself, and play a trump—for you. I'm glad I did, now. Honest, I like you better to-night than I did then. I felt at first, that I must save you, because you were such a boy. Now, I feel, somehow, as though saving you were worth while, because I've found you such a man—such a splendid bronze man."

The bronze man, long fingers inert, gazed past her into space. The minute-hand, on the tower-clock, climbed swiftly up the other side of the half-hour line, but he was not even aware of it. Understanding at last, he was thinking. He had heard vaguely that there were such women as this, whose womanhood came to find their souls unsullied by so much as a tainted thought; whose simplicity was utterly complete, but, if he entertained an expectation of meeting one, it was far outside the grim course of his business life, least of all would he have anticipated it in Curtis Jadwell's wife. He marveled that a year of society life would pass over her without teaching her to blush at the impropriety of her situation, but her eyes were untroubled by even a doubt; immediately the real man in him came into play.

Meanwhile, the girl rippled on ecstatically: "I hoped, secretly, that you would make a new start and play a better game. I—I thought possibly you might square accounts with Uncle Sam. But I'm not going to give you my standard of honor. You are capable of making one for yourself. I only advise that you be called away, on business, very soon—and disappear."

He opened his mouth to speak the words that were suddenly exulting to be free; to give the explanation that would free him from doubt in her mind and let her look at him with the same trust that she felt for the rest of the world. Then he glanced at her, and paused with them still unsaid. To his keen, perfectly trained senses, hands betrayed unlimited truths, and hers, pink, and white, and muscular, their fluttering, impulsive motions quieted, had become the stillest things he had

ever seen. He soberly remembered that the hand of Fate, that summer past, had drawn a chalk mark between them, and, as he gazed at her, her very soul bared in her frank eyes, he understood that, all unawares, she was very close to that white dividing line. He recognized that she must not come across, wondering, with a little pang of pleasure, if it would pain her when she learned that there was no crossing. Again, he remembered, seriously, that beneath the gold of her gown and hair and eyes, she was still golden, through and through, without a flaw—and she must be kept so. He remembered, with a sense of responsibility, that she had called him the bronze man; and, he knew, she referred to the tinge dyed on his features by many suns of many places where he had toiled, often in the wide open, performing his tasks for Uncle Sam. But, beneath the bronze, he felt that there existed within him a deeper metal, strong, hard, immutable, and not unworthy to match her own. Instantly, he was genuinely glad that, if she were facing a moral issue, it would not fail to ring true to her need.

Instead of what he had intended to say, the strength of a resolution flashed into his eyes, and—"Yes," he said deliberately, "I'm going to 'play square.' I'm not going to give you the details of the streak of luck that brought all this about; that would be cowardly. I'm not going to thank you; that would be a pretty mean way of showing you how I feel." He straightened to his full, splendid height and smiled kindly down upon her. "I am going to show you that Jay Remington *can* be a man. First, he is going to pay back all he has taken from Uncle Sam. Then, he will leave Government Service forever. After that, he will start out again, and, this time, will win—I'm sure of it—because you have made the game worth while. That is my standard of 'squareness.'"

He stood regarding her, thoughtfully. She was still in the first glow of her girlhood, teeming with life and health and youth—and yet, she had been a wife almost a year.

Her voice again brought him to his senses. "I am so glad, now, that I came," she was saying. "I can't help

wishing, though, that I had known you sooner—"

"Nor I," he interrupted, thoughtlessly, and stopped, little rivulets of shame veining his cheeks and temples and brow.

But, she plunged on, the subtlety of his meaning utterly lost to her conception.

"Do you mean that? You think, perhaps, all this might not have happened if you could have talked to some one before? I've often meant to invite you up for dinner, but Curtis has been so busy, and so many social demands interfered—" her voice trailed into silence.

He glanced hurriedly out of the window at the tower-clock, and remembered, on her account, that the ninety-three train had arrived some time before. "Just now, I suppose it is better that I should take your advice and leave," he said abruptly. "Honest, you can believe what I've told you. Good-by."

There was a certain finality about the lean, bronze hand he offered, and, dazed, she laid her soft one in it, in the manner of one who has learned to accept the inevitable merely by the practice of submitting to it again and again and again.

"Good-by," she said softly.

He smiled reassuringly, shook her hand with that gripping man-clasp that carries a world of comradeship, and turned to go.

When he reached the door, her voice struggled free from its clamp of restraint.

"Mr. Remington."

He turned back, attentive, courteous.

She had advanced a few steps after him, lost in the impulse of her eagerness. "Oh," she breathed, "Oh—good-night."

For a moment, he seemed about to come back to her. Then, "Good-night," he replied kindly, and disappeared.

She stared at the door through which he had passed, long after she was alone. "I wonder." She spoke slowly and there was something tragically whimsical about her words. "I wonder why I didn't know sooner that there were such men as that."

She raised her arm across her eyes as though to shut away a memory. Then, relief came flooding over her, just as the man had known it would. "And he a thief! a defrauder of the Government! I'm glad, Oh, I'm so glad I saved him. He had such wide-open gray eyes—and I liked him so!" She winced as she said it. "I think, though, that I'm glad I know him for what he is, because now to think of him, even to think of him, in the same moment with Curtis, is a sin. Dear old Curtis!"

She leaned across the wide window-sill to see more plainly the bustle of evening traffic in Washington Street. As she watched, an automobile whirled up close to the curb and stopped, panting; a man stepped into the glare of an electric sign, and she caught a fleeting glimpse of a tall, clean-cut figure in evening clothes, a finely chiseled set of features, with thin, firm lips puffing on a cigar.

She rose hurriedly and passed out into the lobby to meet him, hastily fastening her long cape, as she went.

When they had gone together through the swinging doors, Rathburne stepped casually from the shadow of the elevator and walked, grimly erect, across the lobby to the assistant postmaster's private office. He paused a moment beside the table, full in the glow of light that had a moment before burnished her hair and lashes.

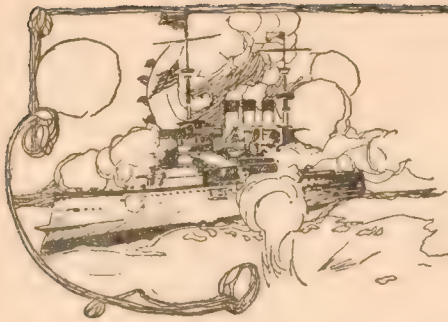
"Deucedly pretty girl," he muttered, reflectively. Then he crossed the room, opened the heavy door of the vault and carried the cash-book to the central desk under the light. For fifteen minutes, he studied it carefully. "Page eight, section one, on your cash-book, shows the first signs of tampering," he repeated, slowly. "Again on page eighteen section three—" He turned the pages slowly, running his long index finger carefully down the entries. "By Jove!" he ejaculated suddenly. "The girl's right! I'll be hanged if she hasn't

got some brains to be able to see through that. I reckon it would have given me some trouble myself." He hesitated, thoughtful. "I thought, at first, that she did know me," he went on, under his breath. "Thought Jadwell might have sent her. After I listened that far; and after I saw how she cared—she was so desperately young, and she was the right sort—it wouldn't have been decent to give the thing away. Damn him, Remington, has got to play fair—I'll make him do just the things I told her I—he—would! and I'll make the terms, too."

He replaced the book and locked the vault. Then, he paused in the act of replacing the few belongings he had withdrawn from the leather case. "Lost the case," he muttered, "and I'd like to have 'clinched' it, too. I reckon, though, it is up to me, as a man of deeper metal, to make good my word. She was a mighty nice little girl, though, and as long as she doesn't know—" He paused, whimsically attentive to the name engraved on his case, followed by its inevitable attachment: "Inspector in Chief." "As long as she doesn't know that," he told himself, "it will be easy for her to forget."

He smiled good-naturedly. "Jove, she liked me better to-night than she did then. That means—" For a moment, he stood, reflectively brushing the rim of his derby. "Gold and bronze," he repeated soberly. "Mightn't they have had possibilities in the welding process? God!"

He turned abruptly and left the room, locking the door and disposing of the key. Then, he left the building, descended the stone steps, and hailed a taxicab. Once as he was flashed through the up-town district, he glanced for a second, out of the window, and straight up the long vista of a shaded avenue to where, at the extreme end, the lights of the country club merged into a single, shimmering point of fire.



The King of Knaves

BY
H. M. EGBERT

ON THE Russian battleship "Potemkin" are a number of political prisoners on their way to exile in the frozen wilderness north of Archangel. How the King of Knaves intercepts the vessel and liberates the prisoners is finely described in this thrilling narrative.

No. IV—THE LIGHTHOUSE OF THE NORTH

OUR little yacht cut gaily through the great waves that rolled in an unceasing surge off the great North Cape of Norway. It was the end of September; the nights and days were equal, but a blue line on the horizon betokened the approach of the Arctic ice-pack that would soon descend to seal that silent coast until the following spring. Nothing could exceed the loneliness and desolation of the sea-scape; not a sail or line of smoke was visible. Far on our starboard lay the Norwegian coast.

There were six of us aboard with Nikolai. We were all consumed to know the reason for our presence in those cold waters, far from civilization. This was the day on which we were to be told. Nikolai assembled us on deck—we were all members of the international league—and broke the seal of a document.

Then he read out the orders.

"Satcha Alexandrovitch, with five other revolutionary patriots is on his way to Archangel aboard the *Potemkin*," he told us.

Our mission was to rescue them. For these men had been the hope of Russia and of freedom through many stormy months; at last, treacherously betrayed to the minions of the Tsar, they had been sentenced, after a mock trial, to perpetual banishment in the frozen

wastes of northern Russia, where no man ever lived long enough to communicate with his friends again. It was a sentence of death in the penal settlement there.

And on the following day the cruiser *Potemkin* would round the great Cape on her journey into the White Sea, the last before the closing in of the ice, bearing her victims.

Afterward, Nikolai communicated to me his plans, as we sat side by side within the cabin, studying the charts.

"Here we shall intercept her," he said, pointing to a dot off the coast. "And all her guns and complement of soldiers and sailors will never save her."

He unfolded his scheme. "Here is the lighthouse," he said. "Its light, burning steadily, alone makes possible a voyage through those rocks and shoals. We shall destroy the light; the ship, misled, will be buffeted to pieces upon the rocks. The prisoners have been warned. They will escape in the confusion as best they can. Perhaps they will perish; but the chance is better than the certain death which awaits them."

It was a desperate undertaking, the little yacht against the armored battleship, but none of us thought of that. Our hearts were elated with the magnitude of our task. That night, running

in close along the rocky shore, we sighted the lighthouse.

It was of the old-fashioned type. The lenses did not revolve, but a steady stream of light issued through them on three sides, shooting out like a warning finger far into the darkness.

"We shall shoot out the glasses," I said to Nikolai. "Perchance, if we shoot out the central lense, no light visible from a distance will issue. The *Potemkin* will sail to her destruction."

Nikolai smiled rather sadly.

"We cannot approach that coast within two thousand yards," he answered. "And, at that distance, no rifle bullet would penetrate those thick lenses. Moreover, at such a distance, who could hit a beam of light by night—or even the light-house, by day, clothed, as it always is, with perpetual sea-fogs?"

"What then?" I asked.

"We must take it by storm," he answered. "It is guarded by three soldiers—veterans of the Imperial Guard. Russia leaves little to chance. It must be captured."

That night the light-house was to be rushed. There was no other way. At dark we felt our way in toward the shore cautiously by means of the lead; we anchored at a distance of a mile and a little more, and leaving two men aboard, the five of us remaining rowed cautiously through the rocks.

More than once our little boat upset, leaving us clinging to the sharp, needle-pointed crags. But each time we recovered ourselves, by some fortuitous miracle. At length, dripping, frozen and utterly exhausted, we reached the rocks on which the great light-house stood. It towered above us, a veritable colossus of masonry; and from its summit the steady beams of light poured forth on three sides through the fogs. And now I perceived why my suggestion could not have been carried out. The lenses were set back into the masonry, so that no rifle bullet could have been aimed at them from the base of the cliffs. Only far out at sea would they become accessible, and there, as Nikolai had said, they could not have been pierced.

We had brought cutlasses and revolvers. At a word from Nikolai we

crept cautiously across our slippery foothold until we reached the iron-bound door at the base of the tower. Faintly within we heard two watchmen singing a peasant song.

"Now, men," said Nikolai, "it will be useless to knock. Nobody will open to the sea, for they know that no person could come here with anything but evil intent." He picked up a huge boulder, poising it aloft with ease. "Follow me!" he cried, and hurled himself with his burden against the door.

That was the mightiest blow that ever I saw struck. It shivered the oaken timbers from bottom to top. Only the iron bolts restrained the fragments of the door. A moment later and we had cleared away this obstruction, just as two bearded giants stepped along the flags within and confronted us.

"Yield!" cried Nikolai in Russian, covering them with his revolver.

They threw up their hands with alacrity. "Where is your companion?" Nikolai asked.

"In the light chamber," they answered sullenly.

We dashed pell-mell up the stone stairs. We came upon him as he descended; in a twinkling he was disarmed. The light-house was ours. It was the work of a few moments to pour out the oil and break the lenses.

"We should have kept those fellows prisoners," said Nikolai. Still, they can do no harm. They will not dare attack us, and there is nowhere for them to go. Now, men, back to the boat."

We hurried down. As we ran we heard shouts beneath us—defiant, mocking, they seemed. When we reached the ruins of the door below, the cries came from the darkness, mingled with the pounding of the surf. Nikolai exclaimed aloud and ran on alone across the slippery rocks. I heard him stumble and fall. Then curses came to us from without and a hail of bullets whizzed past our ears. At the same instant we heard oars grating against the rocks.

Then we understood. We had not thought to guard our boat. The watchmen had taken it, and, knowing every inch of the coast, would doubtless run it away.

Another hail of bullets made us

dodge. Nikolai came limping back to me, his face convulsed with fury.

"We're trapped like rats," he said between his teeth. Then a thought struck him.

"They must have a boat of their own," he called. "Follow me!" He dashed across the rocks again the rest of us after him. When we reached the other side we found the remains of a painter. The light-house keepers had taken their own boat as well. And, while we waited there, a succession of five shots came from the darkness on this side also. We cowered back into the darkness.

"One man in that boat," said Nikolai. "Those shots are from his magazine. And two in the other. Now—are they acting in concert, or does each think we are the other?"

We were soon undeceived. As by a signal, a volley came from either side. Two of our men cried, stumbled, and sliding across the slippery weed, splashed into the sea.

The wind was rising, and all the while the breakers had been pounding upon the rocks. We shouted in vain; we could not make our voices heard above the uproar of the elements. Rain was falling, mingled with a light snow.

"Into the light-house, men," cried Nikolai; and we reached cover just as another volley flattened itself against the massive walls.

We looked around us. In a tiny chamber was a heavy table, bolted into the stone. Nikolai set his shoulder against and wrenched it bodily from its fastenings. Then we half dragged, half carried it along the narrow passage to the doorway, where we tilted it on end. It fitted the orifice well and formed a barricade against surprise.

But our condition was a desperate one. We had only our cutlasses and revolvers against rifles, and no more than twelve cartridges apiece. Yet we were three against three; and if our adversaries had command of the offensive, there was always the yacht.

As the attack was not renewed, we left the third on guard and descended into the bottom story of the light-house. Here we found a curious, winding passageway, cut out of the living rock, ap-

parently, and opening into an extensive chamber, evidently the work of engineers. At the entrance we discovered ample provisions in the shape of flour and salted meat, as well as dried fruits and a great tank of water, connecting with what must have been a rain reservoir on the top of the lighthouse. As we approached the chamber in the rock a low moan reached my ears.

"There are men in there!" I cried to Nikolai.

"Who are you?" he called.

Only a moan answered. An oil lamp was burning in a niche of the damp wall. Nikolai snatched it up and, despite my warnings, advanced toward the dark recesses of the prison, I following. In a far nook we saw a sight that called forth a cry of pity from my companion.

Stretched out upon a bed of filthy straw, his hands chained to steel staples in the wall, was an old man, emaciated, and apparently upon a verge of death. Beside him knelt a woman, of mature years, but bearing the marks of great beauty and dignity, despite the prison pallor of her face.

"In the name of God, who are you, friend?" asked Nikolai.

"I am Adam Gortchakoff," answered the old man, opening his eyes.

I saw Nikolai start back and clap his hand to his forehead.

"How long have you been confined here, Adam Gortchakoff?" he asked with a quavering voice.

"Twelve years," the old man answered. "And my daughter also."

"God help you," muttered Nikolai. Tears welled into his eyes. "Russia has not forgotten you," he said, raising the old man's hand to his lips. "Nor you, Madame. But we thought you had died in Archangel."

"There were twelve prisoners here when I arrived," said the woman in French. "My father and I have alone survived." She turned upon Nikolai fiercely. "Does Nicholas Stambuloff still work for Russia?" she asked.

"He is still our hope and Russia's hope," said Nikolai. Then, hastily, he began telling them of the desperate chance that had led us thither. "Can you endure your chains for a few hours longer?" he asked.

"We have endured them twelve years," answered the woman; and she bent over her father and pressed a damp sponge to his lips. The sight was inexpressibly painful to me; for the first time I began to understand something of the hatred which inspired Nikolai against the tyranny of the Tsar.

But he could linger no longer. Bidding them a hasty farewell, and assuring them of their approaching liberty, Nikolai retreated up the stairs. Outside dawn was breaking. Our man was still on guard; the attack had not been renewed.

"I dared not tell her that her lover is aboard the *Potemkin*, said Nikolai to me. "Nicholas Stambuloff was captured and sentenced to Archangel; he is one of the six revolutionary leaders—otherwise known as Satcha Alexandrovitch. We must and will restore him and his bride to liberty. And think—for twelve years they have not met."

"On guard!" cried our companion.

We heard steps on the rocks; we drew our revolvers and waited. But, what was our astonishment when, through the mists, we saw our two companions of the yacht and the three Russian soldiers conversing amicably together as they approached us. A short interrogation convinced Nikolai that the truce was a genuine one. We hurried down and, by the aid of a file which the soldiers gave us, had soon freed the prisoners from their bonds. Then, seated together over a meal, explanations were offered and received.

It appeared that the light-house was used as a secret penal station to which prisoners were sent who had been sentenced to the mines of Archangel. The secret had been well kept, and this explained why none of those sent to the frozen north had ever been heard from. They were not there; the cruisers put them invariably upon this desolate rock, where they remained in chains until death claimed them. The soldiers naturally thought that we had discovered the location of their captives; this explained their desperate efforts to regain the light-house. They had abandoned the attempt, not knowing of the death of two of our men, and had resolved to make by boat for the open sea.

But they had known nothing of our yacht. The men whom we had left there, seeing the soldiers advancing in their boat through the fog, had believed them to be us; they themselves were not seen by the soldiers, who, in rowing, naturally had their backs toward the open sea. Thus the two parties ran into each other's arms. Cut off from the open sea, the soldiers had nowhere to escape; on the other hand, the men in the yacht, anxious to learn our fate, opened a parley with them, being all Russians and from the same territory. In the end it was recognized that a truce must be effected until the fortune of war should decide for one side or the other. This was satisfactory to the soldiers, but more so to us, who knew of the approach of the *Potemkin*.

"Fools that we were," said Nikolai to me. "Had we known what we know now we should have let the *Potemkin* land her new captives here, concealing our yacht in the offing, and, when she had departed, we should have taken them with us and sailed away. Now all is lost. The vessel will pound to pieces on the rocks and our captives will die with the crew. Or if they land, we shall encounter the attack of a hundred desperate men. At all costs the *Potemkin* must be saved."

"We can save her yet," I answered. "One lens is still unbroken. It was struck from the frame but not shattered. With this we can bring the vessel in safely."

"How?" asked Nikolai.

I took him up into the light chamber. As I had said, one of the three great lenses had remained uninjured. Then I explained my plan. As Nikolai took it in he became greatly excited. He clapped me upon the shoulder and strode up and down the room, vowing that the bride should yet be restored to her husband, from whose arms she had been snatched a short week after the wedding, twelve years before.

This was the scheme. The single lens, set into the central frame, would convey the light straight out to sea and afford a signal for the cruiser. The *Potemkin* would anchor in the offing, place the prisoners in a boat under a guard, and row them ashore. We should admit

them, capture and disarm the guard, and hold them in the vaults. The next party that came would meet a similar fate; and so all who arrived, for even if they suspected any danger, we could defend the light-house against a regiment, while the thick fog would render a bombardment impossible. What would probably occur, however, would be that the ship's officers, after the second party failed to return, would believe that both boats had been swamped in the breakers, and would take the ship back to Russia without further investigation.

We raised the great lens into the central frame. We refilled the oil lamp; and once more, though on either of two sides was darkness, through the central aperture a great searchlight shone straight out to sea.

It was a little after mid-day when, through the thick mists that enfolded us, we heard the booming of guns. One, two, three—and silence. Then the signal was repeated.

It was the *Potemkin*.

We put our three friendly enemies down in the vaults, first exchanging clothes with them. They went readily enough, when we had explained to them that their imprisonment was only temporary, until after the vessel's departure. Then three of us, dressed in the Russian uniform, with the two other men in the rear of us, waited for the arrival of the boat.

It seemed an endless interval—it was really about an hour before the ship's boat grated against the rocks. She carried the six prisoners, chained, with six armed guards. Nikolai welcomed the sailors in their native tongue. They advanced, entirely unsuspecting. Then, in a trice, we had sprung on them and disarmed them. So sudden was our attack that they attempted no resistance; they stood staring at us, foolishly grinning. The prisoners were no whit less astonished.

I did not admit Nicholas Stambuloff to see his bride, as Nikolai wanted. The shock would have been too sudden for both of them. We kept her below with her father; he still required her constant attention, although the hope of freedom had wonderfully fanned the flickering flame of life. But he would

live now; he would see freedom if never Russia again.

We placed our new captives with the soldiers below and waited for the second boat. But no boat came. With the callousness of the Russian officer, the commander cared nothing for the fate of the crew. If they had perished on that dangerous coast, at least their captives, chained as they were, had died with them. That was all he cared about. At four o'clock we heard four guns fired in swift succession. It was the sign of departure.

Excusing himself, Nikolai rushed up the stairs. I would have followed him, but he signed to me to wait below. When he returned I could gather no information as to the reason of his departure.

We brought our captives, now nine in number, up from the vaults. The situation had already been explained to the sailors by the three soldiers. We offered them a safe passage to England, our destination, whence they could readily ship aboard some boat for the Baltic. As there was no alternative, our terms were eagerly accepted, and once more our enemies were converted into friends. I congratulated ourselves upon the termination of our adventure—bloodless, save for the death of our two men the night preceding.

But when at last Nicholas Stambuloff understood the situation he turned upon Nikolai like a madman.

At first his anger was incomprehensible to all of us. Nikolai, soothing him as a child, told him that presently he should meet some one whom he would be glad to see.

"There is nobody whom I would be glad to see," raved Nicholas. "Do you know what you have done, you hound? Listen, and I will tell you.

"Twelve years ago my bride, married a week to me, was snatched from my arms and carried off to a dungeon by the soldiers of Russia's tyrant. I never saw her face from that day to this. After a mockery of a trial she was found guilty of conspiring against the Tsar and sentenced to Archangel.

"I could have given myself up and received the same sentence. I could have been banished thither and have joined

her there. And I refused. Do you know why I voluntarily cut myself off from sharing her exile? For Russia's sake. For Russia's sake, and because, while free, I could still fight for liberty, I hid from the soldiers, I worked in Russia for the cause. Every day I have hoped for capture; and every day I have worked like a mole in the dark to avoid it—for Russia's sake.

"And when at last the Tsar laid hold of me and I was sentenced to Archangel, all my heart leaped up. I knew she was not dead. Had she died I should have felt and known it. I always knew that somewhere my wife lived, waiting for the day of reunion. And all through the voyage on the *Potemkin*, I was happier than I have ever been before, because I was going to her and should see her again.

"And you, you fool, have ruined this! You have given me back my accursed liberty, and once again I must return to Russia to fight for freedom."

Nikolai had signaled to me in the midst of this tirade and I had understood. I went into the vault and led the woman up the stairs. I think she saw him first. Her face grew even paler than the prison pallor had bleached it. Then a flush spread over her cheek and throat. I caught Nicholas by the arm and spun him round. At first he gazed at her with incredulous eyes; then he drew toward her, wonderingly. She held out her arms. I turned and left them.

On the next day we pulled out to the yacht and put our crew aboard. There was nothing but joy among us all at the prospect of departure from those gloomy shores, for already winter was at hand and ice floes choked the sea.

There was no time to be lost. We set off southward down the Norwegian coast toward a land of sunshine. I never saw a happier couple than Nicholas and his bride. Only one thing saddened me; both announced their determination to return to Russia to take up the people's battle.

"It is right," said Nikolai. "That is their only happiness in life. And some day through their efforts and those of their comrades, the land will find its peace again."

Upon the rocky shores lay the wreck of a mighty ship—an armored vessel. Through the glasses I could make out the name *Potemkin* on the stern.

She lay half submerged among the lapping waves. There was no signal, no sign of life on board. Had a man survived that sudden wreck he must have perished in the boisterous surf. Nikolai, standing by my shoulder, smiled grimly.

"Look at the light-house," he answered, to my unspoken question.

And then, looking backward, I saw no light.

"Yes," said Nikolai, "that is my work." And then he told me what he had done in the tower on the preceding day.

With his blood-thirst unsatisfied, he had crept up and shifted the great lens from the middle to the side compartment. The light, cut off from the open sea, now flared at an angle of ninety degrees, invisible from where we were, but clearly discernible round the arm of the coast. The captain of the *Potemkin*, ignorant that the direction of the light beam had been changed, had steered his course by it straight upon the rocks and perished there, with all his crew.

"THE ERRAND OF DEATH"

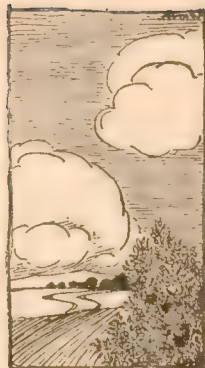
MYSTERY of the most fascinating kind characterizes the second of "The Strange Cases of Doctor Xavier Wycherly"—to be published in the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE for July. "The Man Who Lived Again" (page 401, this issue) will give you an idea of the wholly enthralling quality of these novel narratives; and we are confident that you will find this next of the psychologist's adventures even more vivid, unique and absorbing.



Double Stamps

By

HAROLD EVERETT
PORTER



EUPHEMIA hated the flat. Augustus hated the flat. Winslow Algeron Throckmorton, their ten-year-old son, loved the flat—refusing to understand how the delight of a dumb-waiter, the open-work telephone exchange inside the corridor downstairs, and the front door that opened with such a delicious click when the button was pressed above, failed to compensate in the eyes of his parents for a few trifling defects in light, heat, space and air. Winslow was a reversion to type; but Augustus and Euphemia thought with little pride of their forbears in the pliocene or other geological periods, partly because they longed for a real home of their own, and partly because they objected to the family in the layer above them (which had corned beef and cabbage every other day) and also to that in the downstairs layer (which had a parrot and two dogs).

Day by day they recited their wrongs to each other: the hideous wall-paper, the doors which waved unsteadily on antediluvian hinges, the dank little elevator that rose and fell dreamily and entirely without regard to whatever frantic ringings of the bell might summon it, the radiators which didn't radiate, the hall-boy service that didn't serve—well, hating the flat, they decided to move, and deciding to move they bought all the Sunday papers, gave Winslow the comic section to improve his artistic sensibilities, and eagerly perused the real estate pages, finding therein much joy, and scattered infor-

mation which was entirely too true to be good. For instance, who could believe that a lot valued at \$67.79 in East Marshgrass two years ago is taxed for five thousand dollars to-day; or that last week a man sold for twelve thousand dollars what was merely the frogs' ballroom of Stony Brook in 1908. Searching for a home in that chaos was something that might have filled Diogenes with awe, but to Augustus and Euphemia it brought the joy of all imaginings, and finally sent the head of the family—no, I mean Augustus—out to Trolleytown, N. J., to inspect some houses there; thence he returned filled with zeal, ambition, and eighteen malaria germs—the only natural resources not mentioned in the prospectus.

"It's wonderful," he said to Euphemia when the happy family sat about the living-room table after supper. "It's the prettiest suburb of New York! We can get a Queen Anne cottage, brand new, on the best residence street, for two thousand dollars, fifty dollars down and the rest as rent. The sidewalks are all laid, and the sewers are to be started next week. The subway will eventually run within half a mile of the house, and they're already negotiating for gas and electric lights, so you can cook by electricity, dear. There's half an acre of ground for a garden and a tennis court and a bit of lawn and a pergola and a tent for Winslow to play in. There'll be the best of neighbors, of course, and they're planning for a neighborhood club-house

next spring, and a country club a little later on. The house has a place for a furnace—it isn't in yet, of course, and there are flowers and shrubs and trees and grape-vines and all that sort of thing ready to set out as soon as we sign the lease."

"It sounds attractive," admitted Mrs. Throckmorton, busy with her crocheting. "But even if the payments are so easy, how could we manage to meet the first ones? It's all we can do to make both ends meet as it is."

"I wanna stay here," whined the youth Winslow, cocking one ear to the sound of the hurdy-gurdy in the street below as he festooned himself about the clattering radiator.

"You keep still," admonished his father. Then, turning to Euphemia, he added with mental quotation marks—"The evil that men do lives after them in the shape of progeny that reap the benefit of their life insurance. Listen to that child, Euphemia! Here he has a chance to drink in the fresh air and the sunshine, to imbibe Nature's prescriptions free of charge, to spend his childhood in the garden-spot of a continent, to revel in the birds and the flowers—yet he whimpers for this sordid environment, and—"

"Winslow's tastes are exceptional for a child of his age," remonstrated Mrs. Throckmorton. "And besides, that hasn't anything to do with saving money."

"In this way," continued the father, becoming more lenient as he noted his wife's belligerent attitude, "the way to make both ends meet is to pull them together. Now, we must pull together. We can easily save something out of my salary—"

"That's little enough, and moreover our lease here runs for six months yet. And besides that, there's the furniture we'd have to buy, and all the fittings for a house that we don't have to get for a flat, and—"

"See here!" interrupted Mr. Throckmorton savagely. "In the first place *please* oblige me by not calling this a flat. It's an apartment. In the next place, answer me this: have I, or have I not, heaped and lavished upon you all the necessities of life?"

"Why, yes, I suppose you have."

"Have I ever at any time failed to provide you with whatever luxuries my simple means afforded?"

"Why, no, I suppose not."

"Well then, let me explain. Certainly our lease here has six months to run, and that's just what makes this plan feasible. During those six months we'll save for the house. We'll have a little fund just for that purpose. We'll pay fifty dollars down, and twenty-five dollars a month, and by the time that we move into Trolleytown we'll have paid two hundred dollars, and in addition saved enough to buy furniture and things. Do you see now? Is Augustus Throckmorton negligent of the safety, the comfort and the happiness of his wife and offspring—Winslow, I'll spank you this minute if you pull that lamp over!—I say, am I or am I not a good provider, and a kind husband and father?"

"You're all right," admitted his wife, reaching for her ball of yarn, "but how are we going to save money? We're as economical as possible now, and how much are we saving?"

"The saving falls in your province," announced Mr. Throckmorton. "We're economizing now, you say. Well, we'll economize more. We'll cut down expenses to bare essentials. We'll squeeze every penny until the Indian yells, Euphemia. I won't vote this year, so we'll save my poll-tax. We'll wear our old clothes, live on vegetables and cereals—"

"And you stop smoking."

"Wha—what? Me? Me stop smoking?"

"Yes, you stop smoking, and get a safety razor. Then you'll buy less than five papers a day, and get a box of blacking and shine your own shoes."

"But a man's got to keep up with the times—and I only smoke a little—and I've got a fine barber—and—"

"Also you'll cut your lunches down to a quarter a day or less. You can borrow papers. I'll make you a present of a safety razor myself. Yes, Augustus, you're quite right to think of economy in this self-sacrificing spirit. Instead of going down to the corner for your extras and half a dozen cigars

to-night, you can read the almanac and smoke a pipe. You paid down fifty dollars, you say?"

"No," replied Augustus feebly, "but we've got to Monday to keep the house."

"That's good. I'll go out myself and see what your judgment amounts to. Come here now, please, and hold this yarn for me."

In the days that followed there was some perturbation among the family in apartment 56 of the Morrisania. Immediately after Mrs. Throckmorton's excursion to the wilds of New Jersey where she came, saw, and was conquered, little Winslow experienced a sudden curtailment of his usual supply of pennies, which was fully as serious a matter to him as the loss of the cigars and billiards to his father. Mr. Throckmorton did smoke once or twice at the office, but his wife, being gifted with an extraordinarily keen scent, could detect the odor of tobacco, cloves or mint with equal precision, so that even the mildest forms of dissipation were precluded; yet even with this strict régime, the savings fund grew so slowly that Mrs. Throckmorton gradually began to doubt the wisdom of the proceeding.

"You've signed the contract," she said, "and we've taken the responsibility, but I can't for the life of me see how we'll have enough to buy that furniture. I've thought, and thought, and thought, but I can't get anywhere."

"Say, Euphemia," cried Augustus, "I have a scheme! Trust me—me, Augustus Throckmorton, for the bright idea! Have you ever got any trading-stamps?"

"Never. I don't trade where they're given."

"You foolish, foolish woman! You change your grocer to-morrow. Change the butcher, the baker, everybody! Do you realize that you've been squandering my hard earned money all these years? Don't you know that for these stamps we can furnish an entire home?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, we can. As it happens, a bunch of catalogues was distributed in the office to-day, and I'd forgotten that I brought one home. There, look at this!

Look at that dining-set on the very first page! We can get that for just one hundred thousand stamps—six pieces."

"Well—"

"Oh, I know we have a dining-room set already—I was just giving you an idea of the thing. Look at this library set for a hundred and fifty thousand stamps. Isn't that fine? And you know there are a dozen different concerns—a lot of different kinds of stamps. I'll bring home all the catalogues to-morrow. Now don't you see what we've been missing?"

"Why do we want a library set," inquired Mrs. Throckmorton, "when we haven't a library?"

"Why, you short-sighted little woman,"—here he kissed her affectionately—"we can get all the books we want by saving some other kind of coupons. I was reading about it in an advertisement only the other day. Novels and cook-books for you; philosophy, economics and government for me; and picture-books for Winslow."

"Well, it may be true. Oh—oh! Augustus! Look at those kitchen things! Aren't they lovely? Why didn't we think of this before? I'll change every one of my tradespeople to-morrow morning."

And the little lady was as good as her word, for on the shortest of notices, she summarily abandoned all her tried and true dealers, and began to purchase meat for which she paid cash and received blue stamps, groceries at a flaringly new emporium which distributed purple coupons, and milk and eggs from a dairy which left crimson stamps with each bottle of milk or crate of eggs. In fact, from that eventful night everything she bought came from a firm which thrust into her willing hands tokens of many colors, all of which she carefully arranged in groups, each secured with its rubber-band, and deposited in a small drawer of the wall-desk in the front room.

It was such a pleasure to collect all those attractive bits of paper—it was much easier to buy herself a new dress, or Winslow a new toy from the department store, when she knew that it meant the progress of a few steps towards the new home. It was easier for her to

go to market in the consciousness that even if she had to purloin a few more cents from the building fund, the furniture fund was so much increased; and it added such zest to her purchasing, and chased away the old bugbear of haggling with a merchant over his prices. Why, the thing was automatic; the more she paid for provisions, the more stamps she got, and the more stamps, the more furniture to come. And when she had worn dog-eared the catalogues of other premium houses, and learned that stamps of one kind might be redeemed for those of another at a downtown exchange, it was like finding the philosopher's stone! To pay cash was a little hard until Augustus got into the habit of leaving nearly all his salary, save carfare and lunch money, with his wife; and that naturally made a very easy arrangement all around, so that eventually it was eminently satisfactory even to Winslow, for in the catalogues he had found air rifles with which to slay the ferocious wild animals of Trolleytown, as well as bicycles and footballs which made his heart leap with boyish abandon and quite inured him to the loss of the dumb-waiter, and the roller-skating on the street.

On Sunday mornings they always traveled out to Trolleytown and proudly went over again and again the ancestral halls of future Throckmortons. They saw with delight the subway burrowing along within four miles of their street, and doubted not the least that in time it would thrust its inquisitive nose through the turf at their very corner. The first time they took the trip (of course the trolley-cars needed two hours from Hoboken, but that was merely a temporary inconvenience) the land-agent piloted them through the district with great gallantry; but after that, or perhaps it would be better to say after the lease was signed and the first payment made on the Queen Anne cottage, they saw him no more, excepting when he led a timid flock of prospective investors along the already-sidewalked and soon-to-be-lighted streets. Often they saw placards upon near-by houses or vacant lots, with the magic word "Sold," but there was little to fear from this, for the agent had

assured them that it would surely be possible, once you had outgrown your own plot, to buy the adjacent one; and that was comforting to Augustus and Euphemia. Winslow saw many cats and rejoiced. Eureka!

It was after a long period of this sort of thing that Mr. Throckmorton came home one day with a lighted cigar between his lips.

"Why, Augustus!" exclaimed his wife in amazement. "What on earth do you mean? You promised to give up smoking!"

"So I did," he smiled, patting his son's curly locks. "But this is different. See, Euphemia!"

He drew from his waistcoat pocket some rectangular bits of paper, and handed them to her.

"Look here! These cigar stores give those with every purchase, and I brought home a booklet of their premiums, too. Look at this carving outfit, and the chafing dishes, and stockings, and all useful things. Why, we can save as much this way as any other. Look at this manicure set, too."

He adroitly pushed the booklet, opened at the most seductive page, into her hands.

"That's all very well," said Mrs. Throckmorton grudgingly, "but it seems like an expense just the same, and besides, you smoke so little that it won't help much."

"Wont, eh? Look out, Winslow, you're spoiling my shine! Wont help, did you say. Do you know how much those certificates are worth? Two cents apiece. *Now* figure it up—there's twenty of them right there. That carving set comes to the Throckmorton home for four hundred."

"Well, what did you get them for? What's that under your coat?"

Augustus produced the package which he had concealed during the preliminary skirmish, and ripped away the brown paper wrapping. It was a box of cigars.

"I got them for this," he said proudly. "They're fine cigars, too. I can smoke again, you see, and save all the more money. *Now* will you credit your husband with some ingenuity?"

His wife embraced him with tears in her eyes.

"Always thinking of Winslow and me, and our little home," she murmured brokenly. "How can we ever repay you?"

"Give me something to eat," replied her thoughtful spouse, with a reassuring gesture," and afterwards, when I smoke another of these really excellent cigars, we'll go over all those premium-lists once more, and plan what to get first."

It was shortly after this that Mrs. Throckmorton first took advantage of the week-end sales at the Empire Stores, and bought among other things which she really didn't need, a whole barrel of flour, because the accompanying double stamps completely filled one book for her collection. She had to store the barrel in the basement, and the janitor made her pay storage on it, but flour is always good to have on hand, and was therefore a double economy. On the same basis of argument it was an excellent idea for her to purchase on subsequent Saturdays a chest of tea, a bag of coffee, and several bushels of potatoes, which were frightfully cheap at the price, and frightful potatoes at that. She was a little fearful after this last expenditure, for she would have to ask Augustus for more money that night, but her fears were disarmed when he appeared at the flat bearing another box of cigars and a small cut-glass vase done up in tissue paper.

"It was a Saturday special at the cigar-stores," he explained, "and even if it did take a little more than I honestly cared to spend—look at this dish! It'll be just the thing to put on that sideboard after we get it."

"You mean the one we'll redeem for the soap-wrappers? Yes, wont it? I ordered another box of soap to-day, by the way, and one more will give us almost enough, dear."

"That's fine, Euphemia!"

"Yes, and I ordered lots of groceries to-day, and while Winnie and I were waiting for you I counted up the books we have. There's one of green stamps, four of red, three purple, one National Stores, fifty-two soap wrappers, six Judicial books, and a hundred and eleven novel slips for the library."

"That's elegant!" exclaimed Mr.

Throckmorton. "That's fine! We'll have that house furnished in no time now. How much is there in the savings fund?"

"Well, I had to take out all there was left to pay for things to-day; but we really save in the long run, because I got everything so cheaply."

"Of course we will," replied Augustus joyfully, "You're the wisest little woman that ever had a home and Winslow is the best—Winslow, if you kick any more paint off that chair you'll hear from me. Do you understand?"

As the year wore on and March approached (March was the month set for their departure) it grew harder and harder for Mr. Throckmorton to make his payments to the land company. Somehow the family had grown woe-fully short of money and although they saved religiously in every possible manner, yet it was a sad fact that more than once Augustus was forced to borrow from his fellow-clerks at the office where he worked. To be sure there were barrels of flour and chests of tea, and bags of coffee in the larder; there were yards upon yards of bargain-sale and double-stamped dress-goods in Mrs. Throckmorton's chiffonier, but somehow the savings fund, so suddenly become defunct, had never been resurrected. The piles of stamp-books in the drawer grew and grew, however, until there came a golden day on which there were almost, but not quite enough, to guarantee the library set, so that Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton went together upon a grand shopping debauch, and finished the first heat of the home furnishing handicap in a blaze of glory. There was a whole ham at the butcher's (they all rather disliked ham, but there were triple stamps, you see). There were twenty pounds of cut sugar, for as Euphemia remarked—"We can always use sugar, and Winslow is so fond of it." There was a bushel of cranberries, and a chicken to go with them, and another chicken on account of the double-extra special offer made with them; there was a broom—I mean half a dozen brooms, for the new house would need to be cleaned thoroughly, and they might as well buy everything

now in town. Oh, I can't begin to tell half they bought, save that there were things to put on them and in them, and at the end there was an especially good box of cigars for Augustus, which made just enough coupons for him to redeem them for the carving outfit and a beautifully glistening cigar cutter—on which Winslow at once cut himself, and dulled the knife. All this array of purchases they ordered sent to Trolleytown, to their very own "Elfdream" (Euphemia got it out of a book), for this was the Saturday before they moved; everything was packed, boxed and crated, and there was but one more night in the dingy old Morrisania before the glorious country, and Nature's symphony on the diapason of the forests instead of the steam-pipes.

Sunday morning they finished the last details of the packing.

"It'll take a good deal of money to get started after all," said Mrs. Throckmorton casually, gazing about her empty living-room with its heap of chairs and tables in the center. "There'll be the moving men, and—"

"By Jiminy!" ejaculated Augustus in a startled voice. "Do you know, I spent every cent of my salary last night on those things! I haven't enough to pay the movers. We'll have to send some of them back."

"Oh, they wont take things back at those stores; but you can borrow a little money, and pay it back afterwards."

"To tell the truth, Euphemia—"

"Hammer this nail in a little more.—What is it, dear?"

"To tell the truth, I had to borrow money two or three times last month, and I don't believe I can get any more."

"Borrowed money! Augustus Throckmorton! And you were going to economize!"

"Well, didn't I? You bought all this stuff yourself in wholesale lots. I couldn't pay for it all."

"How much did you borrow?"

"Two hundred dollars, I guess."

"Two hun—oh, Augustus!"

"Well, I had to pay the real-estate people too, you know."

"But where's all the money we were going to save?"

"You spent it, I suppose. I didn't."

Mrs. Throckmorton burst into hysterical tears, and Winslow, perceiving that the opportunity was ripe, proceeded slowly and methodically to emit a tearless, awe-compelling roar.

"I—I tried to be careful," sobbed Euphemia. "And I th-thought you w-wanted that library set."

"So I did, so I did," replied her husband, nervously pacing the bare floor. "But I don't for the life of me see where all our money's gone. Winslow, stop that howling or I'll—or you'll be sorry. There, there, dear; don't cry. Why Euphemia, dear! *Please* stop crying, and try to figure this out with me."

Mrs. Throckmorton obediently dried her eyes and waited.

"We've lived economically to the last degree. We have—how much groceries and that sort of thing?"

"H-how many stamps have we?"

"I put them out just a few minutes ago. Wait until I count up again."

There was a blank, dramatic silence, during which Euphemia sat on a packing-box and sniffed; while Augustus stood in the middle of the room, his hands full of stamp-books, and counted. At length he turned and faced his wife. There was sorrow in his eyes—and wonder, and rage.

"Out of my salary for the last six months," he announced, "these stamp-books show that practically for nothing but groceries we've spent five hundred and fifty dollars—out of seven hundred and twenty income. We have a lot of bales of breakfast food, six or seven barrels of miscellaneous rot that we can't use up in a year, and out of it we get an imitation bird's-eye maple library set, and—"

"An' the cuttin'-thing," shrilled Winslow.

"You go out and see if there's any mail," ordered his harried parent. "This is none of your funeral; would that it were."

Mrs. Throckmorton sniffed again.

Our things will rattle around in that house like a pea in a derby hat," continued the owner of Elfdream soberly. "And we've got to borrow money to move with; our lease is up and we can't stay here. Well, Euphemia, we'll get along somehow, so don't you cry any."

more. Hello, Winslow—two letters, eh? Let's see what they are."

He tore open the first—which bore, Euphemia noticed, the imprint of the real-estate concern.

"The miserable beggars," he exclaimed. "Phemy, dear, listen to this! There are legal proceedings against the company or something like that, and they're returning our lease with—by George, with a check for all the payments I made, less five per cent! And here's the check—for two hundred dollars!"

"I wanna stay here," bawled Winslow, crawling to the summit of the pile of furniture, and surveying his parents with a malevolent eye.

"Well, you will all right," proclaimed Mr. Throckmorton. "I never did like the idea of commuting, and the janitor told me yesterday this apartment hasn't been taken yet."

"I loved the cottage," murmured Mrs. Throckmorton regretfully. "But I suppose we ought to be thankful it's no worse. What's in the other letter, Augustus?"

"It's from Johnson, dunning me for the money he lent me; and I'll send him this very check. We'll stay right here, Euphemia—"

"We'll use the provisions somehow," said she gaily, "and instead of the library set, we'll use those stamps for

something else, and we'll keep right on living in the dear old Morrisania. Winslow, you take this money and run down to Eisenberger's delicatessen, and get a pound of tongue and a loaf of bread. We'll hunt up some things, and have dinner right now."

"We wont want the set, as you say," said Augustus, putting the dining-table on its feet and ripping the top off the box containing dishes. "Got the silver, Phemy? What was I saying? Oh, yes. There's a set of astrakhan furs for the same number I noticed in one catalogue, and I guess you've earned it, little woman."

"The carving things'll be handy, anyway," she said pensively.

"Yes, and the cigar cutter."

"But you ought to stop smoking again, dear."

"I like a pipe pretty well, anyhow."

"Here's the bread an' tongue, ma," cried Winslow, stamping into the room, "an' here's the stamps. The man said they just began to give 'em."

Augustus took the trading-stamps, rolled them into a little wad, and tossed them through the open window.

"Winslow," said he sternly, "if you ever bring another of those things into this flat I'll—I'll—" Here he caught his wife's warning glance, and finished rather feebly—"Well, anyway, you'll wish you hadn't."

The Man Who Guessed Right

By J. ALBERT MALLORY

NOW you've a free hand, Dick," said the business manager. "Do anything you like with the paper so long as it doesn't hurt the advertisers. Barton was somewhat out of date and shied at anything that looked like sensation, but yellow journalism pays these days,

and as you have a natural tendency in that direction you might let it out a little. I wish you could dig up the money to buy Barton's interest. He thinks he is going to make a fortune in those Mexican mines and he wants to get out of the newspaper business."

"Hang it all!" exclaimed the city editor, bringing his feet to the floor with a bang and thereby scattering a litter of papers in which they had been reclining on his disorderly desk. "If I hadn't put all my cash in Orange Heights I'd have the money now. I got stuck on that deal for fair. I'll try and make a live paper out of this rag though. But it'll be hard. Nothing ever happens in this town. Now, there ought to be a clue to a real yellow story here somewhere—let's see."

He picked up a copy of the *Daily San Diegan*, fresh from the press which still rumbled on the floor below, and hastily glanced over its columns.

"Ah, here we are. Our correspondent at Old Town writes:

"A gang of men are at work digging a couple of wells and erecting a pumping plant in one of the cañons near here. It is said the owner of the land is prospecting."

The business manager laughed. "It seems to me that's the whole story."

"No imagination," the city editor responded. "Why should anyone want to develop water within the city limits and at great expense? Besides, I know that there's no water there. I'll look into this."

He arose, put on his hat and descended the stairs to the street. At the door of the business office he met the girl with whom he was in love. She was a stenographer in the manager's office, very pretty and, Dick believed, cared considerably more for him than she had ever admitted. He had proposed innumerable times and she had always laughingly rejected him. She simply refused to take him seriously.

"Say, young lady," was his greeting, "when are you going to marry me?"

She laughed. "You always ask me that when you feel particularly jubilant over something. What is it this time?"

"The B. M.'s given me a free hand. I'm going to turn yellow and make this old rag hum. But you haven't answered my question."

She looked at him quizzically. "I'll marry you, Dick," she said in a bantering tone, "when you have made a fortune by yellow journalism."

"Oh, that wont be long," he returned.

"Come on, I've got to catch a car to Old Town, but I can walk part way home with you."

She took his arm.

"How's Orange Heights?" she asked.

"A drug on the market. Say, I sure was a fool to buy that stuff. And I need the cash to buy Barton's interest. Of course I'll realize something on it in the course of time, but so long as Fleckless' A. C. deal is blocked by Hitchcock there'll not be much doing in real estate."

"Just what is the trouble between Fleckless and Hitchcock, Dick?"

"It's a long story of frenzied finance and had its beginning away in the past before San Diego was on the map. Hitchcock was mixed up in some dirty political deal at Sacramento and tried to keep Fleckless from obtaining some franchises at 'Frisco. Fleckless is many times a millionaire, but he plays the business game according to the rules, above board and open, and he went in to smash Hitchcock and came pretty near doing it. Drove him out of politics and pounded him in the stock market until he had nothing left but his San Diego property. Since then Hitchcock has quietly made a mint of money and has practically monopolized the business of this town. He had done it all so quietly that no one seemed to notice it until Fleckless got his eye on San Diego, decided to have his Oriental steamers put in here and build a direct railroad to the east. Then San Diego real estate took a boom and the air was full of prosperity talk. But all of a sudden Fleckless discovered that his old enemy, Hitchcock, owned nearly the whole waterfront and wouldn't sell; also that Hitchcock's dinky little railroad into the back country lay across the prospective right of way of the Arizona and California and no terms could be made. It looks as if the matter would have to be settled in the courts, which means years of delay. Meanwhile San Diego doesn't get her railroad and steamship lines and Hitchcock enjoys great big chunks of revenge. Fleckless is very anxious to come to an agreement and has made generous offers. Well, I must leave you now. So long!"

A half hour later he stepped from a car in Old Town and after a climb up a steep, cacti-covered hill, came to a point from which he could see the object of his search—a long, low, uncompleted building located in the bed of a small cañon. As he neared it he saw several men at work and he asked one of them where he could find the boss, and on being informed that he was inside the building, made his way thither.

He found the boss busily engaged in directing the operations of some men who were placing a long bar of solid steel upright in a deep, well-like hole at one end of the building, and the men positively refused to answer questions. Though Dick knew, by sight at least, all of the building contractors of the city, he did not know this man. He soon realized the utter futility of asking questions and turned away, closely observing things around him.

At the opposite end of the building, which was about four hundred feet in length and not over twenty-five feet wide, was another steel pole, firmly embedded in concrete. Several sections of what appeared to be great metal cylinders were swung on steel cables in the center of the room and many more similar sections were stacked along the walls. A number of large crates containing machinery were piled near the entrance. The building itself was constructed of galvanized iron fastened to remarkably heavy beams and rafters. And not the least remarkable feature of its construction was the fact that it was built in narrow sections, each section overlapping the one next it, like shingles on a roof, and each section wholly independent of its neighbors, being fastened to them in no way.

As he viewed every detail of this strange place, Dick wondered at its meaning. Here was a mystery, he told himself, a real mystery. No need to draw upon his imagination in writing this story. And to make the mystery more profound, all the men whom he questioned refused, like the foreman, to answer any pertinent questions.

Finally, the steel bar being adjusted to his satisfaction, the foreman came up to Dick and tapping him on the

shoulder, pointed significantly to the door.

Dick flushed and opened his mouth to speak, but before he could utter a word the other had him by the shoulder, escorting him to the door and saying in a hard, crisp voice:

"It's time you got out of here, young man. You look harmless enough, but this place is not open to visitors. Get."

He shoved Dick violently out of the door and into the arms of a stoop-shouldered young man who was about to enter and who exclaimed cheerily:

"Why, hello, Raymond! what on earth are you doing here?"

Before Dick could reply the foreman remarked in a chagrined voice:

"I beg pardon, Mr. Langdon. I didn't know the gentleman was a friend of yours. He was looking around inside and asking questions and I put him out."

The young man thus addressed gazed coldly at Dick for a moment.

"You did quite right, Brown," he said. Then to Dick: "What did you say brought you here?"

"I didn't say," Dick replied. "But if you want to know, I'll tell you that I came to learn what I could of this mysterious building. Thought I might be able to make quite a little feature story of it. I don't know just exactly what you're doing, but in these days of yellow journalism absolute truth in every detail is not essential, you know. I think, Mr. Langdon, I remember something about your purchasing a piece of land out here recently. And I've learned from the men inside that this gang is imported from 'Frisco—and they're constructing a very peculiar building for an unknown purpose. And you wont talk and your men wont talk. It will make a rather interesting story, don't you think?"

Dick's temper was badly ruffled. Seeing the looks of vexation his words had produced on the faces of the two men, he continued:

"And I shall not forget to mention that newspaper men are kicked off the premises. Yes, I think it will make interesting reading, and you will probably have other visitors out here to look around and ask questions."

"See here, Raymond,"—and Langdon assumed a patronizing smile—"you're a good fellow. I'm sorry we hurt your feelings. But even a newspaper man should have some little regard for the rights of private property. Mr. Brown, here, acted on my orders. I have my own reasons for not wanting the general public messing around here, and I don't want this story to get into print. I'll make it worth your while to keep quiet—will let you into a good thing in real estate."

Dick grinned. "No thank you. I've been stuck several times in real estate speculation and I don't care to have another try at it."

Langdon and Brown glanced at each other and then both gazed earnestly at Dick. Finally the former said:

"Come inside, Raymond. I'll tell you exactly what I am doing. You can help me if you will. We need a newspaper man."

Next day the *San Diegan* contained no mention of the strange building in Old Town and when Dick met the girl that night he was more jubilant than ever.

"You're going to marry me in six months," he announced. "It'll take me about that long to make my fortune."

"Silly boy," she exclaimed. "Will you never be serious?"

"Serious? I'm in dead earnest. Things are going to happen in this old town."

"What kind of things?"

"Oh, earthquakes, for instance; I've got an interview with a man who says there'll be an earthquake next month."

"He's crazy," said the girl.

But precisely at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 30th of March the earthquake occurred. It was not a very violent shock, but still the hardest ever felt in San Diego. The *San Diegan* was just going to press and the earthquake delayed the paper only a few minutes and it contained a complete account of the *temblor*, together with a large picture of Charles M. Langdon under which Dick had had printed "The Man Who Guessed Right."

The business manager came upstairs with a copy of the paper in his hands.

"Dick, old man," he cried, "you've

done yourself proud. This Langdon story is great dope. We'll sell an extra large edition to-night. You've got the other papers beat to a standstill. But how the deuce did you get this interview and all up in so little time?"

Dick did not answer.

"I'll bet a nickel," continued the other, "everyone in town but you had forgotten all about that crazy Langdon's prophecy. Merely a coincidence, of course, but you have worked it up in great style." The business manager grinned delightedly.

"Yes, I think it rather good, myself," Dick returned coolly.

He picked up a copy of the paper and glanced at the story in question. It was embellished with a large scare head and began:

Readers of the *San Diegan* will remember that on the 2d of February we printed an exclusive interview with Mr. Charles M. Langdon, the musical expert, in which he stated that since the great San Francisco disaster he had been devoting himself to a study of earthquake phenomena with the result that he had learned certain facts enabling him to foretell the coming of an earthquake, and that he predicted one for this city during the last week of March.

Is it a remarkable coincidence that today's shock occurred at the time set by Mr. Langdon? Or can it be that he really has discovered some great secret of nature? Following is an interview with Mr. Langdon obtained just as we go to press.

In the purported interview, Langdon was quoted as saying that while the present shock had been very slight, he knew San Diego to be in the center of an earthquake zone, and a shock might be expected in the course of a year fully as great as the one which had demolished San Francisco. Furthermore, he predicted three shocks for April which would occur on the 5th the 12th and the 25th of the month.

Because of the way in which the *San Diegan* had featured his prophecy, Langdon immediately became the most prominent man in the city. The other papers followed Dick Raymond's lead and secured interviews with him. The matter was of course treated in their columns as a remarkable coincidence and somewhat of a joke, but when the second shock occurred exactly as pre-

dicted, the coincidence was considered more remarkable and the joke without point. And then on the 12th came the third shock and on the 25th the fourth—the last two having been, by Langdon, foretold to the minute.

By that time the name of "The Man Who Guessed Right," was known wherever there were printing presses and newspapers. The Associated Press sent one of its best men on from New York to get at the bottom of the mystery, but Langdon, when asked pertinent questions, merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed. He was photographed at home and on the street and seated at the organ in St. Joseph's church, where he was organist. Prediction followed prediction and one earthquake followed another, each foretold almost to the second by Langdon.

Investigations were made by the world's most able scientists and all went away puzzled. Then the president of a California university, whose article on the cause of the great San Francisco earthquake had marked him as an authority, came to San Diego. He visited Langdon and, like all who had preceded him, learned nothing. And for ten days thereafter he might have been seen tramping over the hills and mesas around San Diego, examining rock formations.

Then he went home and wrote a magazine article which was quite lengthy and scholarly, the sum of which was that San Diego was outside the earthquake zone and it was impossible for a succession of shocks to occur there unless all scientific knowledge of the subject was at fault. Yet the shocks continued to occur with alarming frequency; and while it was impossible for anyone to foretell the coming of an earthquake, Charles M. Langdon did that very thing.

The only thing really new in the article was the discovery by the professor that the center from which the earthquakes seemed to emanate was located somewhere in Old Town.

Dick Raymond read the article and grinned. "Good thing the professor went home," he said to himself. "If he had continued poking around here, he might have discovered something really

interesting." He shoved the magazine in his pocket and mounting his bicycle, rode out to the strange building in the cañon back of Old Town. It was quite dark when he reached the place and in response to his low knock the door was opened by Mr. Brown, the contractor who had ejected him on the occasion of his first visit.

"Langdon here yet?" he asked as Brown carefully closed and locked the door.

"Not yet," was the response.

In a corner near the door, an electric lamp in a green shade shed a circle of light on a rough table covered with papers and draughting instruments. Near the table were a couple of chairs and in one of these Dick seated himself. Brown sat on the table. Presently there came a knock at the door and Langdon was admitted.

"How goes everything?" was the young musician's greeting. "We've got to wind this business up pretty quick. That article," pointing to the magazine which Dick had thrown on the table, "may set somebody on the trail."

"We are near the end," said Brown. "The whole fifty thousand is invested and the A. C. gets its right of way tomorrow if everything goes as expected."

"Yes, and everything must go as expected," replied Langdon. "It's up to me to keep the newspaper men away from the truth until you give the word to Dick to print his story and that will be—"

"Just as soon as I get word that the final papers are signed," Brown interrupted. The deal will probably be closed to-morrow, but you know how such things hang fire and it may take another shock to do the business. I'll start the machinery at midnight anyhow."

"Of course. My reputation as an earthquake prophet must be sustained at all costs," Langdon laughed.

"The thing to do now," said Dick, "is to prepare the story I am to give to the public. I have here a rough sketch of it which I'll read and you can make any suggestions or alterations that occur to you."

He took from his pocket a notebook and commenced to read.

Finally Langdon arose and looked at his watch.

"I guess that'll do, Dick," he said. "And it's about time to start the engine, Brown. Better stay a little while, Raymond, and see the thing in operation. It will probably be your last chance.

Brown leaned over the table and grasped the handle of an electric switch and instantly the interior of the building was flooded with light.

A few feet from where he sat Dick saw sticking out of the concrete floor, the steel pole which was being put in place at the time of his first visit. From the top of it a large steel rope, stretched taut, ran to a similar pole at the other end of the building. Midway between the two poles and so arranged that its outer surface just touched the cable, was a large wheel with wooden spokes and a circumference composed of innumerable, tightly-stretched silk cords.

Suspended from the heavy steel girders which supported the roof was a great cylinder composed of narrow, closely fitting sections. This great pipe was about fifteen feet in diameter and extended the entire length of the building. It was open at one end and at the other was a large, fan-like wheel on a shaft to which was attached a belt from a gasoline engine. Brown was busy at the engine and in a few minutes the sharp, staccato of its explosions was heard.

With no noise save the low whirr of well oiled and perfectly adjusted bearings, the large fan and silk-covered wheel commenced to revolve. Brown threw a lever by the side of the latter and a large block of resin was pressed against the silk. Immediately there arose a shrill scream, a piercing note, perpetual and unvaried.

Dick shivered. "Gh," he said, sticking his fingers in his ears, "I don't see how you can stand it. It sets my teeth on edge."

Brown laughed, "Oh, I'm used to it." He glanced at his watch. "The next earthquake, and I trust the last one will strike San Diego at exactly ten minutes after seven on the evening of day after to-morrow."

The next afternoon, as the young

editor was putting the finishing touches on a highly sensational story he hoped to publish on the morrow, the business manager entered his office.

"These earthquakes have played hob with this town," he remarked, ruefully regarding the latest issue of the *San Diegan*. "Business has all gone to pot and no one will advertise. People are afraid of the place and the price of real estate is going down every day. There has been no real damage done, but no one knows when a real heavy shock may come. I heard to-day, though, that Fleckless has taken advantage of the low market and shaky condition of things to make a compromise deal with Hitchcock. I hope it's true. If the A. C. goes ahead with its construction work it'll take a mighty big earthquake to hold this town back."

"Just wait for to-morrow's paper and get ready for the return of prosperity," said Dick, putting on his hat and going down stairs to meet the girl.

"You look quite good natured this evening," greeted the pretty typewriter. "I'm horribly tired and hungry. You might take me somewhere to dinner."

Dick stopped and turned his pockets inside out. "Busted," he announced. "But I know a place where my credit is good. We'll go there."

The girl looked stern. "Dick Raymond, what on earth have you been doing with your money? Your salary has been raised twice in the last four months. You ought to have just lots of money."

Dick assumed a serious expression. "Next week I'm going to marry you and then we're going for a tour in a big red automobile—or would you prefer a cruise in our private yacht? Then I'll buy Barton's interest and we'll live happily ever after in a big, green bungalow up on the hill where we can sit on the front porch in the evening and watch the ships come in."

The girl tossed her head with a gesture of annoyance. "Oh, Dick, why will you not be practical. Always talking about what you are going to do. And you haven't answered my question. What have you done with your money?"

"Two dollars of my last week's pay went for this precious document," he replied taking from an inside pocket a carefully folded paper which he opened and held before her astonished eyes.

"Oh, Dick, a—a marriage license! How dare you? I—"

"Now don't make a scene right here on the street. No need to get excited. Next week the wedding bells for us. Haven't forgotten your promise to marry me when I made my fortune, have you?"

"And you've—Oh, Dick, you haven't really—?"

"Yep. I've put every cent I could scrape together in San Diego real estate."

"Why, good gracious, are you crazy? With San Diego an earthquake city, what on earth can have possessed you to be so foolish?"

"But I know that San Diego won't be an earthquake city much longer. And when the A. C. commences construction work, realty values in this town will go higher than ever."

They entered a small but fashionable restaurant and as they seated themselves at a corner table, a party of three men entered a box on the opposite side of the room. Two of them nodded to Dick.

"The little man who looks worried is W. J. Hitchcock," said Dick in response to a questioning look from the girl. "The others are Swayle and Martin, attorneys and agents for Fleckless and the A. C."

"Is there any truth in this rumor that Fleckless and Hitchcock are about to come to terms?" she asked.

"You bet there is. Hitchcock's money is all tied up in San Diego and at present he is about as near broke as a man can be and own a lot of property that is without market value and upon which he has to pay taxes. But Fleckless' original offer for the property he needs is still open and it is said that Hitchcock is so much in need of money that the deal is likely to be closed at any minute."

"Fleckless don't seem to be much afraid of the earthquakes," was the girl's comment.

"No more than I am," Dick grinned.

"And for the same reason. He knows there won't be many more."

"That's the second time you've said that this evening." She looked at him shrewdly. "You're holding something back. What is it?"

"It's not my secret, little girl," he responded. "It belongs to—Well, Mr. Langdon here knows all about it and as the whole thing will be made public in a day or so you may be able to induce him to tell you."

Langdon had just entered and in response to Dick's beckoning finger came over and was introduced to the girl.

"She thinks I am crazy for buying real estate. I wish you would convince her that I am not," Dick pleaded. And after a few preliminary questions from the girl, Langdon explained the earthquake mystery.

"I have known for more than a year that I could make earthquakes," he said, "but I never thought of doing it until one night at a dinner in San Francisco, in conversation with Mr. Fleckless I explained my theory. It struck him that in case all other means failed, if he could make San Diego an earthquake city and smash realty values, he could bring Hitchcock to terms. So eventually he supplied the money and I proceeded to put my theories into effect. I located the plant at Old Town so as to be near the heart of the city and at the same time be out of the way. Raymond, in search of news, stumbled onto it and threatened to throw the light of publicity on us. We took him into partnership, let him run the publicity end of it and he, Mr. Brown (who stays at the plant to run the engine) and myself, made a pool of all the money we could raise—(about fifty thousand dollars)—and a few days ago we invested it in close-in city property. When the truth is known and property values go skyrocketing again, Dick's share of that fifty thousand will be considerable."

"But, Mr. Langdon,"—and the girl leaned eagerly forward—"do you mean to say that you actually make the earthquakes?"

"Exactly. And since I've told you so much I will explain just how it is done. It is very simple.

"It was my performance on the pipe .

organ and my knowledge of music that gave me the idea. The lowest sound audible to the human ear is sixteen vibrations a second and on the organ I play, the lowest base pipe gives just that sound; when I touch that note on the keyboard, if it is prolonged, the vibrations effect every atom of ponderable matter in the church and cause a slight tremor throughout the entire building.

"Scientists have found that the drop of a certain volume of water at a portion of Niagara Falls which causes the ground to tremble for a considerable distance, gives out a prolonged tone of eight vibrations a second.

"Earthquakes have a tone of four vibrations a second.

"I calculated, then, that all that was necessary for me to do in order to produce an actual earthquake, was to construct a gigantic pipe, similar in principle to those used in pipe organs, and have it tuned to four vibrations a second. If this note was continued long enough it would set the earth in its vicinity trembling just as does the fall of water at Niagara. But in order to make sure of results and to get just twice the power I otherwise would have done, I strung a steel rope between two steel poles set deep in the ground. This cable I tuned down, just like the string of a violin, to four vibrations a second and it is played upon by a mechanical bow. The whole thing is operated by a gasoline engine which, by means of a fan in the end of the pipe, keeps a sufficient draught of air going through it to produce the necessary sound waves. The vibrations which result are in the course of time communicated to the earth by means of the steel poles. The result is an earthquake.

"Before the machine was set in motion, I calculated the approximate time it would take for the synchronization of the sound waves to produce an earthquake and made my first prediction. After that we learned by actual test how long it took and consequently my prophecies have been fulfilled exactly."

He paused and glanced at a clock on the wall. "Dick was present," he continued, "when the engine was started night before last. The next earthquake is due in three minutes."

"—I don't think these earthquakes will continue. San Diego property is as good to me as to Claud Fleckless. Gentlemen, I will not sell. The market is bound to recover. There has been no shock for three weeks."

It was the high, nervous voice of Hitchcock issuing from the box across the room. Dick and Langdon looked significantly at each other. They heard the low tones of the two lawyers arguing with the obdurate millionaire. Then Hitchcock cried again:

"I will not sell. Fleckless beat me at Sacramento and now, by Heaven, I'll shut him out of San Diego."

Then the earthquake came. The dishes on the tables began to jump and rattle. The brilliant chandeliers swayed crazily. Langdon dashed to a telephone near by. In an instant he was connected with Brown at Old Town.

"Don't shut off the power," he cried, "till I give the word. Hitchcock is here and refuses to close the deal, but I think an extra hard one will fetch him."

The vibrations increased in power. Tables slid jerkily across the polished floor. Chairs were overturned. The cash register slipped from its stand and fell in a shattered heap. The waiters dashed panic-stricken into the street. Then, above the noise, came the voice of Hitchcock:

"This settles it. The elements, themselves have beaten me. I give up. I am ready to sign the papers."

Langdon, swaying unsteadily at the telephone, called:

"All right, Brown. Shut her off, quick, before the whole town comes down."

In less than half a minute all was quiet again. Langdon turned to Dick and the girl.

"That shock was to have been of one minute's duration, but I thought it the psychological moment for a really heavy one. Once the vibrations become manifest they continue until the machinery is stopped or until they become so severe at the plant as to tear things to pieces. I think Mr. Fleckless will need no more earthquakes and my occupation as a prophet is gone."

He turned as some one behind called him. Mr. Martin had stuck his head

between the parted curtains of the box across the way; he looked at Langdon and winked.

"Will you and Mr. Raymond be so good as to come here and sign some papers as witnesses?" he asked.

Dick and Langdon entered the box. Hitchcock, with unsteady hand, was signing his name to some imposing looking documents. The deal was closed in a moment, and stuffing a couple of certified checks in his pocket, the defeated millionaire rose and left the restaurant.

Swayle and Martin, Dick and Lang-

don shook hands jubilantly. The waiter brought wine, and Mr. Martin, holding his glass high above his head, cried out:

"To the Man Who Guessed Right!"

"To-morrow," said Dick, "the *San Diegan* will contain some very interesting reading for Mr. Hitchcock. And to-morrow"—he turned to the girl. "Fill your glasses again, gentlemen, and drink to the girl who to-morrow will become Mrs. Raymond. What say, little girl?"

"I think I'd prefer the automobile, Dick," she murmured.

When Ingraham Ceased Smiling

BY CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

INGRAHAM'S smile faded for an instant as he met Jackson eye to eye.

"So you're here, are you?" Ingraham asked.

"I guess I am," Jackson answered.

Ingraham's smile came back. His upper lip lifted at the left corner and was drawn toward his ear. It was an unpleasant, mirthless smile.

"Well, I'm here too," Ingraham said. "And this trip I expect to stick."

"I'll make no trouble for you, so long as you leave me alone," said Jackson.

They were standing at the foot of the stairs leading to the dispatchers' room. Jackson, third trick man, was just going to work. Ingraham, second trick copier, starting that day, was just quitting.

Ingraham was handsome—had always been noted for his looks. He was nearly six feet tall, straight, with good shoulders and brown eyes and curly brown hair. He was alert and vivacious, too, and knew how to make friends. He'd have invited confidence if it hadn't been for that eternal, disfiguring smile.

Jackson stood under him by three inches. Jackson was stockier—a thick-chested, slow-moving man, with a square, honest face, and big, quiet, gray eyes that looked calmly out on a world of turmoil.

"Well, I don't know," said Ingraham now, "that our debt is squared. You butted in when it was none of your business and took my job from me. I had a time getting another. I'd been running trains by now if it hadn't been for you."

"Oh, all right," said Jackson, opening the door to go upstairs. "I told you then that a man who hit the booze had no place in a dispatcher's office. But you're not working for me now. You can do what you like."

He went upstairs. For him the feud was ended. Not so for Ingraham. Rightly interpreted, his smile stood for what of malevolence there was in his make-up and he had never forgiven Jackson for what Jackson had done to him. Next morning Jackson went walking with Delia Price. Ingraham went walking by himself. Rounding a street

corner, Ingraham came upon the man and the girl. Ingraham knew Jackson did not fritter his time away; if he went walking with a girl, he was not flirting with her; he meant something. Hence, catching the girl's eyes, Ingraham, let his smile widen across his mouth till his white teeth gleamed between both lips. Dimples deepened in her cheeks. Her eyes followed him over her shoulder. Her slim grace and the poise of her blonde head were not lost on Ingraham.

"Who is that?" the girl asked Jackson.

Jackson told her.

Within a week Delia Price and Ingraham were meeting one another and a flirtation began—smilingly on the man's part, hectically on the girl's. They talked about Jackson a good deal. Ingraham told her how Jackson had gone to headquarters where they had worked before and entered complaint, with the result that Ingraham had lost his job. The girl believed this slowly.

"That doesn't sound like him," she said.

Bronson, the second trick man, took the news to Jackson.

"He's fooling with her," said the trick man. "You oughtn't to stand for it."

"Well," said Jackson, "I have no claim on her. If she prefers him to me, I guess that's the answer."

Bronson sought out the girl.

"What did he say, when you told him?" she asked.

He repeated what Jackson had said.

"If that's the way he looks at it, I guess he doesn't care much," she commented.

She flirted desperately and openly with Ingraham after that. Sometimes his attentions pleased her; sometimes they made her afraid. For once in a while when she suddenly turned to look at him, she found a fire in his eyes that disquieted her. Those who worked with Ingraham discovered, too, that he was having periods of abstraction, during which a frown replaced his smile.

Bronson waited till Ingraham was out of the office. Then he leaned across

the table to Jackson, who had just come on duty.

"Say," the second trick man exclaimed. "How long are you going to let this thing run on?"

Jackson raised his quiet eyes.

"What's the matter now?"

"Well, Ingraham has raised that old story about your father. Most everybody in the village is talking about it."

Jackson's rage came to him from afar, so to speak. It was like a water-spout that whirls and advances. When it reached him, it swept him up into it, off his feet.

He rose.

"Take my place a while, will you," he asked.

He flung himself out of the office. Though there was the chill of late October in the air, he did not mind the cold, despite the fact that he had neglected to put on his coat, and that his sleeves were rolled up. He pulled his hat down over his eyes, and he did not stop till he came to Ingraham's boarding house. Ingraham was eating a lunch alone, at the dining-room table. The door yielded to Jackson's touch. He entered.

"I want to talk to you," he said, and his face was aflame with passion.

"Go ahead," said Ingraham easily, his smile a little thin.

"Outside."

Ingraham regarded Jackson for half a minute.

"What's eating you?" he asked.

"Come outside," Jackson repeated.

Ingraham saw that something had mightily stirred the other man. He rose and they went outside together.

"What's this story you're circulating about me and my father?" Jackson asked.

"Oh," said Ingraham, "I haven't been circulating any story. I told Miss Price, one night when we were talking about you, how your father had got into trouble."

"You knew the truth of that story, didn't you?" Jackson asked bitterly.

"I knew what people said back there."

"Yes; you knew they said my father had stolen the money. But they knew—or a lot of them knew—that he was tricked by other people, and that he was

as innocent as a child. You knew, anyway, that I have been paying the money back. You knew that was why I couldn't ask Miss Price to marry me, and that was why I had to step aside for you. She wasn't bound to me, because I wasn't free."

Ingraham took no warning from Jackson's suppressed fury.

"I don't get the story that way," Ingraham said. "I don't see that hero stuff myself. I'm told your daddy swiped the kale, all right."

The muscles in Jackson's bared forearms corded, his fists clenched. He struck Ingraham on the mouth viciously, with right and left fists before Ingraham could stir. The latter gasped and fell back against the fence. They grappled and went to the ground. Ingraham's head struck a stone, stunning him. He felt Jackson's fingers at his throat. His eyes bulged, his breath tightened, his sight blurred. Then he felt Jackson release his grip and rise from him. He lay a moment till he could see and then he staggered up. Jackson stood there, his face thrust forward on his anger-thickened throat.

"I don't want to kill you," Jackson said. "But you'll quit lying to that girl about me."

Impulses in men are strange. If it had not been for something in Ingraham's heart, he might have said a word or two that would have ended the fight. But his soul was burning. He sank his teeth into his upper lip, holding it. His hand, groping back of him, came into contact with a loose picket on the fence.

"You can't smash me like that and get away with it," he breathed. "If you want to fight for the girl or about her, cut in. I'll say what I please."

Jackson rushed at him, but Ingraham sprang away. Then he whirled the picket and brought it down twice on Jackson's head. Jackson staggered against the fence as Ingraham had done, then slowly slid to the ground. Ingraham bent over him. Blood was slowly coming through his hair and out across his temples. His eyes were closed, but he still breathed.

He was heavy, but Ingraham managed to gather him up in his arms. He listened at the door of his boarding

house for a few minutes, and, hearing no sound, he entered. Half-dragging, half-carrying Jackson, he managed to get him to his own room on the second floor. There he deposited him on the bed and left him while he got water and a couple of towels. In a few minutes he had bandaged Jackson's wounds. Then, closing the door, and turning down the light, he went in search of a doctor. He found one a block away, and they came back and entered the house softly. Jackson looked up at them in a few minutes and tried to puzzle out what the trouble was. The doctor took away the towel and examined the wounds.

"Ugly, but no fracture, I guess," he said.

He dressed the cuts anew and left, telling Jackson to lie quietly until morning, when he would come again. As soon as he was gone, Jackson slid to the edge of the bed.

"Well," he said between his shut teeth, "do you want to go outside and finish this fight. I'm on, if you'll just let me know what you're going to fight with."

Ingraham made a gesture as if he were shoving something from him.

"I don't want to fight any more," he said. "It wont get us anywhere. Besides, I had a bad minute when I carried you up here. You better lie down and sleep, or at least rest. I wont bother you."

Jackson swore.

"Sleep in your room?" he said. "Not me."

He looked 'round in a sort of daze.

"Where's my hat?"

"I guess it's lying on the ground where it fell."

Jackson went down the stairs. Following, Ingraham saw him pick up his hat and put it on his head. Then he rolled down his sleeves and started up the street in the direction opposite to that he would have taken to reach his office. Ingraham followed discreetly.

Jackson went in at the gate of the house in which Delia Price lived. He rapped loudly on the door. This was presently opened and Delia's father looked out. From where he stood, Ingraham could hear him explain. Then he put out his arm to support Jackson and the dispatcher lurched inside.

Ingraham walked the streets for hours—till the dawn was beginning to turn the black sky to steel. He found himself near the dispatcher's office then. He climbed the stairs. The second trick man, still working for Jackson, was looking up at the ceiling, his pipe between his lips. He started and dropped the pipe when he looked at Ingraham.

"What hit you?" he asked.

"Jackson."

The second trick man had to take an "O. S.," and Ingraham watched him dully as he wrote on his sheet.

"What did you do to Jackson?" Bronson then asked.

"I hit him twice with a fence picket."

Bronson stared.

"Did you put him out?"

"For a while, yes."

Bronson sprang up and came 'round the corner of the table. He was a red-headed giant. He took Ingraham's arm in a steel clutch.

"That's like you, to use a club," he said. "I've a notion to—"

"That wouldn't do you any more good than it did Jackson good to smash me when I wasn't looking for it or for me to use the picket," said Ingraham dully. —"You're hurting my arm."

"What're you going to do now?" Bronson asked, loosing his hold.

"I'm killing time."

"Where's Jackson?"

"At Delia Price's house."

"What's he doing there?"

"I suppose," said Ingraham bitterly, "that Delia is nursing him."

There was something in Ingraham's voice that cooled Bronson. He sat down on the corner of the table.

"Say," he said, "haven't you got about enough of this game? Why don't you let those two people alone? You don't want anything out of it but some fun, and Jackson is too serious and too good a man to make unhappy. Don't play a rôle like that all your life."

"As soon as it's late enough, I'm going to see her once more," said Ingraham stubbornly. "She and Jackson aren't engaged—at least, they weren't last night. Lord knows, whether they are now or not."

"You'll only make trouble by going there," said Bronson.

"Well, you can come with me," said Ingraham. "I'll wait until you are relieved. That will give me time enough."

He sat in the office, gloomy and preoccupied, till nearly seven o'clock. Then, the first trick man being about due, he said he would wait for Bronson around the corner. He went somewhat unsteadily down the stairs and out into the cool early morning. There was a mist of autumn rain. He stood out of this in the protection of the building till Bronson came down.

"You'd better pass this up and get some sleep," Bronson said. "You want to get back to work to-night and steady down to business."

"Work!" Ingraham repeated in a queer voice.

At Delia Price's home, Ingraham knocked on the front door. Delia's father opened it. Ingraham shoved his way unceremoniously in, and Bronson followed him. Bronson, looking over Ingraham's shoulder, saw the girl moving about the kitchen beyond. She seemed not to have heard them at first, but presently she glanced into the room. She gave a little gasp of surprise, and then she slowly entered toward them, closing the door after her. She seemed to have had a moment of embarrassment, but this had passed and a slow flush as of anger came into her cheeks. Bronson noted what an air of domesticity her gingham dress and her apron gave her. He thought Ingraham, in his state of mind, was out of place in these peaceful surroundings.

Delia's father glanced from her to Ingraham, and then he went out of the room. He was rather an old man and unused to the excitement which the coming of Jackson and of Ingraham had occasioned in his household.

Ingraham held his wet hat between his clenched hands and faced the girl. She looked out upon him, with wide eyes under hair somewhat disordered.

"I want to talk to you for a minute," Ingraham said.

The girl glanced at Bronson.

"Oh, he knows all about it," Ingraham said—"Is Jackson still here?"

"Yes," she answered. "I was getting his breakfast when you came."

"You weren't engaged to Jackson yesterday," he said, and his voice was uneven—"Are you to-day?"

"Yes."

Ingraham had been standing loosely, regarding her with solemn eyes. Now he slowly gathered himself together and straightened. He struggled to lift the left corner of his lip in a smile, but he failed.

"I suppose you think that's fair to me," he said.

"Fair?" she repeated.

"Why, yes; we've been together a good deal. There has been some—"

"Oh, don't—" the girl began.

Then Bronson interposed.

"Say Ingraham, don't you think you've gone far enough with this thing. The girl says she's engaged to Jackson. So far as any claim you have on her, she's his wife. You tried to make trouble between them, but they seem to have come to their senses. It's nothing to you, except that you want to get even with Jackson. Can't you get over that. Man, this marrying proposition is too serious for anybody to be interfering with, just for spite."

But Ingraham ignored him.

"Don't you think I should have been given a chance to talk to you before you became engaged?" Ingraham asked.

"I—I thought we were only fooling," the girl said.

"You told me once you cared for me."

The girl's lips trembled.

"Why," she faltered, "I didn't think you—I thought you understood—Oh, we were just flirting. I was silly—crazy, I guess. I knew he cared as much as I did, but I wondered why he never asked me to marry him. He had never told me about paying off his father's debts. —But it's all right with us now, except that I'm ashamed of the way you and I have carried on."

"Carried on—" said Ingraham.

"Oh, come," said Bronson then. "What's the use of all this nonsense, Ingraham. Jackson will be coming out in a minute and there will be a row."

Ingraham looked at the closed door as if he hoped Jackson might issue from it. Then his eyes bent themselves upon the girl in a long, searching look. Slowly

his lip curled in the old, familiar smile.

"I guess I've made a chump of myself," he said. "Good-by!"

He bowed to her, swung himself around, and got himself out to the sidewalk. He and Bronson walked half a dozen squares in silence.

"What are you going to do now?" Bronson asked.

"Leave town."

"Afraid Jackson may start something when he gets out?"

"I'm not afraid of Jackson," said Ingraham slowly. "I'm afraid to stay here and see them together."

Bronson did not understand.

"Why," he said, "you got what was coming to you. You tried to make a monkey of a good man and fool around with a good, though rather giddy girl—and you got well beaten up for your pains. You sure got what was coming to you. I can't see what good it did you to go butting in again this morning."

Ingraham shivered.

"It satisfied me that there was no chance," he said. "Man,"—and he lifted his haggard eyes, "do you think that beating is my punishment? I started out in fun with the girl to make Jackson jealous. After a while I was coward enough to tell that old story about his father to turn her against him in earnest. But it's no fun now. Why, I'd give my soul for her. All my life I've played with women that way, but this has got me. I love her. I'm sick and crazy about her. And now all I get is a chance to sneak out of town."

As the vibrant voice ceased, Bronson looked at the wet, marked face of the man he had despised. He wanted to make sure that Ingraham's face did not belie his words. He was half suspicious that the smile he disliked might be on Ingraham's lips. But it was not. The lips were closed in a thin, straight line to keep them from trembling.

"Hum," said Bronson in a little dismay. "That's pretty tough; but I s'pose it's what a man gets for fooling with the buzz saw."

Then he thought of his friend Jackson, happy now; and he had a feeling that the gods, or whatever judged, judged justly.



Further Adventures of Matt Bardeen—Master Diver

By FREDERIC REDDALE

HOW Matt Bardeen and his friends learned of certain chests of bullion which had been thrown overboard by pirates in a sea-cave of the Caribbean; how they located this long-lost treasure-trove; how the Master Diver brought it to the surface; and how he was attacked by a giant octopus—these are some of the exciting episodes of this splendid story of the sea.

No. VI—THE CAVE IN THE CARIBBEAN

THE neighborhood of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-eighth Street, New York, with its glare and glitter, its tinsel and tawdriness, its blare and bang and its gaudy all-night life, is not exactly a romantic locality; yet it was there that the somewhat surprising adventures which I am about to chronicle had their inception.

In the first place, I was feeling rather blue that late September evening, when I dropped into Moquin's; there I met Morry Mowbray.

I dropped into a seat and lit a cigaret, ignoring the siphon which Morry pushed toward my side of the table, and smoking moodily.

"How's the yacht coming on?" inquired Morry after a pause. I had just invested in a new yacht, a Crosby model, with an auxiliary "kicker."

"She's all ready—stores and steward aboard," I returned with a momentary flicker of interest.

"Tell you what, then," suggested Morry. "Let's make a winter cruise to the West Indies. That will blow the cobwebs out of your head."

"It's worth thinking of," said I.

We went out and stood at the corner of Twenty-eighth Street, for the night

was yet young. While we waited, a man came from the same direction and stopped in front of us, glancing from one to the other in hesitant embarrassment. Looking him over, I recalled that he had sat at the next table to ours in Moquin's. He was short and wiry, under the average height, black-bearded, dressed in the shore toggery of a sailor of the better sort—blue serge suit, peaked cloth cap, large-buttoned reefer coat, and a loosely-knotted, spotted neck-tie.

"Beg pardon, gents," he said in an unmistakable Cockney accent. "Didn't I over'ear some talk about a yacht jes' now?"—with a backward jerk of his thumb.

"You did," said I, thinking perhaps he wanted a job aboard the *Lassie*, although he did not look like a yachtsman. He was a Ratcliff Highway boy if there ever was one.

"Thought I wasn't mistaken. Which o' you gents might be the owner?"

"Well, I don't know as it's any of your condemned business," I replied, "but if the information will do you any good, I'm the owner. What then? Are you looking for a berth—are you a sailor?"

The fellow gave a short laugh. "Me nyme's 'Enery Bates—sometimes called 'Arry. I've used the sea, man an' boy, since I was thirteen year old—an' I'm forty-five this blessed month, as can be proved by the vestry-book in ol' St. George's Church, Lime 'us. Ho, yus! Hi'm a sailor orl right-o!"

"Well, what's the trouble, Bates?" I asked; the fellow was evidently an odd fish and interesting.

"I wouldn't go so far as to s'y as there's any trouble," said 'Enery Bates, cautiously, "but I've got some vallyble inf'mation"—tapping his breast pocket—"an' 'earin' you gents talkin' abart a yacht, I ses to meself, ses I: 'Arry, me lad, you're a pore ign'rant mucker of a sailor-man with a secret wuth milyuns, an' your gyne is t' freeze on t' them two gents, cos' they wont do yer. That's what I ses, an' then I myde bold t' fol-ler outside."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," said I. Mowbray was grinning with delight. "But I understand you to say that you had some valuable information and a secret? Where do we come in?"

"Ekal shares, gents, both on yer!" exclaimed our queer acquaintance, smiting his left palm with a bunch of knuckles the color of mahogany and as hard.

"Our friend waxes a trifle incoherent," muttered Morry in an aside. "Let's get him indoors somewhere, and see what he's got on tap."

"You're talking Greek!" I exclaimed, turning to Bates. "In a few words—what's on your mind? Out with it, man! We can't stand here all night."

He looked cautiously around, came a step nearer, and taking me literally, uttered in a hoarse whisper—"Salvage! Sunken treasure! Lots of it!" Then he backed away a pace, and stood looking at us both alternately and eagerly.

"We can't talk here," said Mowbray. "Bring him around to the club. A couple of drinks will loosen him up."

The Racket was but a few steps distant, so I said to Bates:

"We'll go where you can talk. Follow on." He fell behind us, and in ten minutes we were in a private room, all three seated around a table. Drinks and cigars were ordered, but greatly to our sur-

prise, Mr. 'Enery Bates declined the former, though he lighted one of the latter.

"Now, then, Bates, let's have it!" I exclaimed a trifle impatiently, suspecting some cut-and-dried cock-and-bull story.

He drew his chair closer to the table, unbuttoned his pea-jacket, and took from an inner pocket an old, greasy, and battered wallet, fastened by what sailors call a piece of marline—thin, tarred rope. This he untied deliberately, and began his story.

"A matter o' twelve year ago I j'ined Uncle Sam's Navy at Mare Island, an' was on th' *Oregon* when she myde that bloomin' big run 'round Cape Horn t' Cuby. Well, gents, my p'tickler mate was a ol' shellback who'd grown gray an' grizzled in the service. We wos thick as two peas out o' the syne pod. Cale Barker, 'is nyme wos, an' he kem f'm down Cape Cod w'y. One night we wos yarnin' an' smokin' our pipes an' he ups an' ses, ses 'e: 'Enery, me lad, some o' these d'ys you'n me'll be rich men—werry rich men,' ses 'e. 'Not in this 'ere business, we wont,' ses I. 'Course not,' ses 'e. 'I means w'en our time's up.' 'Wot's the gyne?' ses I. 'I'll tell yer all abart it some d'y,' ses 'e, an' then 'e shut up tight as a clam. O' course, I thort 'e wos only chaffin', but I found out different. W'en we joins the fleet off Santi-ago, poor Cale takes some sort o' fever, an' bein' as 'ow 'e wos a old man, the ship's doctor gives 'im up. One night the word was passed that Cale was goin' t' slip 'is number 'fore mornin', an' was askin' f'r me the worst w'y. Well, I goes down t' th' 'orspittle—the sick-bay, we calls it—an' sure enough I see that Cale wos due t' get 'is discharge. The light o' fever wos in 'is eyes, but 'e wos all right in 'is 'ead, an' he spins me this 'ere yarn.

"It seems that 'is father wos a deep-water sailor, an' w'en 'e wos a boy, along about the year 1810, the schooner 'e was aboard of wos took by some pirates in the Gulf o' Mexico. The bloody-minded rascals made all the crew 'cept Cale's father walk the plank, but seein' that 'e wos only a lad, they kep' 'im an' myde 'im a sort o' cabin-boy. Soon arter that, they captured a ship

wot was loaded with plate an' jewels an' money. There'd been a shindy in one o' them Spanish-American countries, an' the bishop 'ad secretly loaded all the wealth of his cathedral an' a lot o' money belongin' t' 'is rich friends on a wessel in the harbor, thinkin' t' send 'em t' Spain till the trouble blowed over. The total vally was somethin' like five million dollars at that time. But the pirates nabbed the wessel an' transhipped the treasure, killin' all on board accordin' t' custom. Well, the pirate ship herself was caught in one o' them West Ingy 'urricanes, an' they wos forced t' run for it, an' beach 'er on a little rocky ileyand off the south coast o' Cuby. They hid the chestes—ten of 'em—in a sort o' cave, where they was entirely covered at high water. Their ship ground 'erself t' pieces, boats an' all; so there they wos, 'igh an' dry' an' like t' starve t' death. They 'isted signals o' distress, an' was took off by a passin' wessel, which turned out to be a Spanish man-o'-war. The pirates wos carried t' Havana, an' hanged outside Morro Castle—all 'cept Cale's father, the boy I wos tellin' of. None of 'em peached about the treasure, an' so 'e wos th' only one left alive th't knew the fac's. 'E made a map o' the ileyand with it's bearin's, an' allus 'oped t' go an' get the stuff 'isself. But 'e never did, an' before 'e died 'e ups an' tells Cale the yarn, jest as Cale gives it t' me fifty year arter.

"Well, gents, I never doubted that Cale spoke the truth! 'E died that night, an' knew 'e wos dyin' w'en 'e told me. Th' only question was: 'ad the loot been diskivered an' removed? Cale, with 'is dyin' breath, swore it 'adn't, cos 'e wos sure 'e'd 'a 'eard about it. 'E gave me the map, an' myde me promise I'd 'ave a try on my own 'ook.

"Fin'ly I got my discharge. I had severa' 'undred dollars comin' t' me, f'r I'd been mighty savin', knowin' a little money wouldn't be amiss when I went lookin' f'r the treasure. So I takes passage f'r Cuby, an' lands in Santiago. Then L'ires me a small boat, n' gives it art th't I'm goin' fishin'—which wasn't no bally joke, either. Well, gents, I picked up the ileyand about forty miles east of Santiago an' a matter o' four miles from the mainland; I lo-

cated the cave, an' I spotted the cases! They're there right enough, 'cos why—I went overboard an' dived after 'em! So far as I c'd judge, them cases is just as sound as the d'y they wos dropped there—I figgered that they're built of teak or oak, an' copper-clamped at that. But it'll take a expert diver to heave 'em up.

"Now, you're astin' me w'y didn't I bring one of 'em aw'y with me? W'y, Lord love yer, gents, they're too 'eavy! It'd need a reg'lar diver (naturally I at once thought of Matt Bardeen) an' a proper tackle t' raise them chestes. B'sides, wot could a poor sailor-man do with the stuff w'en it come t' disposin' of it?

"That's th' yarn, Mr. Denver an' Mr. Mowbray. 'Ere's the map, an' 'ere's the story writ down as Cale Barker told it. Now, wot d'y s'y? Is it a go? It'll be a fine adventure, with a good job o' salvage at th' end!"

Bates leaned back in his chair as he ceased speaking, his bright black eyes shifting from Morry to myself in anxious interrogation.

"It's a singularly interesting story, Mr. Bates," I said. "But you can't expect us to say off-hand whether we'll go into the proposition. Suppose you come around to my rooms the night after tomorrow. Here's my address. We'll give you an answer then."

"That's only fair, gents," said Bates. "I'll be on 'and, no bloomin' fear."

There is a streak of romance in every man, I suppose, and mine had been cultivated by long listening to the weird adventures of Matt Bardeen. Anything was better than knocking about New York for the winter. Next night Mowbray and I dined together at the Union League, and over coffee and cigars compared notes.

"Well, what do you think of Mr. 'Enery Bates?" was my first question as soon as we were alone and our cigars were going nicely.

"Either he's a monumental liar, or else the stuff's there as he claims."

"But what good would such a 'plant' do him in the end? He's bound to go with us, and run the risk of being proved a fraud."

"My view exactly," said Morry. "*Ergo*, I think he's telling the truth—or imagines so."

"In which case—" I was beginning, when Morry cut in.

"We call him."

"I'm with you," I said, "so that's settled. What next?" We shook hands on the bargain across the table.

Precisely on the hour, Bates appeared, exclaiming, as he entered and doffed his cap in an easy sea-salute:

"Eight bells, gents, an' all 'ands on deck!"

"Take a chair, Mr. Bates," said I in my capacity of host, "and make yourself comfortable. There are pipes and tobacco, or perhaps you'd prefer a cigar? What will you have to drink?"

"I gets along best with a pipe," was the answer, "an' jest a mouthful to drink yer 'ealth, gents."

"I don't mind telling you at the outset, Mr. Bates," I began, "that Mr. Mowbray and myself are somewhat attracted by your proposal, but chiefly because of the excitement and adventure of the trip. We don't need the money, you know."

Bates motioned with his pipe to indicate that he followed me and appreciated the force of the last remark.

"But there are a few specific points we'd like cleared up before we close the deal."

"Nyme 'em, sir. I'll be plain as daylight wi' yer."

"First, then," I went on, "how deep does this treasure lie?"

"Five or six fathom, at low tide, more or less; tide rises about four feet."

"The stuff's in wooden cases, you say? How many are there?"

"Cale allowed there wos ten or a dozen. I went under water, as I said, an' judging by the feel of 'em I sh'd s'y they wos abart three or four feet square, an' all in good condition."

"How do you plan to raise them?" was my next query.

"We'll want a reg'lar diver, o' course, an' 'e'll 'ave the right kind o' tackle. That part o' the job's easy."

"Well, then, what about a ship, Mr. Bates? Have you any in mind?"

It was now his turn to ask a question.

"'Ow big's this yacht o' yours?"

"Seventy feet over all, yawl rig, with an auxiliary engine guaranteed to give her eight knots in moderate weather."

"Couldn't be better!" exclaimed Bates, slapping his knee. "It's a sweet, 'andy rig, an' th' engine 'll be jest the thing f'r th' inshore work if it's needed."

"How many of a crew shall we want?"

"Either o' you gents a navigator?" inquired Bates.

I signified that I held a master's and pilot's license for all the Atlantic Coast, having taken my examination three years before, besides being a member of the Naval Reserve. Mowbray was also a clever amateur below or aloft.

"Better an' better!" exclaimed Bates.

"Barrin' a Japanee cook an' the diver an' his helpers, 'ere's all th' 'ands we need—you two gents an' me can 'andle that yawl. 'Course, the diver'll be useful if it comes to 'all 'ands.' Y' don't want too bloomin' many people mixed up in a traverse o' this sort—that's my idea."

So far all was satisfactory and apparently fair and above board. I looked cross the table at Mowbray, who nodded back his complete approval and a telegraphic "O. K.—Go ahead." So I resumed:

"Mr. Bates, how long should it take us to make the outward run, lift the treasure and get back?"

"Two weeks t' git there; say a week off the cave; another fortnight f'r the run home—I say six weeks all told, barrin' accidents," answered the sailor.

"What about the Government?" I queried. "Suppose we're interfered with?"

"'Oo's goin' t' interfere? The Spaniards is out o' Cuby. Taint likely there's anybody livin' now that cud git up a 'onest claim t' the stuff. Findin's keepin's, ses I."

"Could you carry the yawl to this little island you speak of?" I inquired.

"I'm no navigator," was the frank answer, "but you put me off Santiago Bay, dark or daylight, an' I'll steer ye straight for it."

The three of us parted that night with a full understanding of what was to be done by each. Morry and I were to go to City Island and bring the *Lassie* down to an East River berth. Bates was

to order the requisite stores for the ship's use. The cook and steward combined, a young Jap who had been with me three or four years, was already on board. Upon him would devolve the laying in of supplies when the yacht lay alongside her pier. To me fell the task of engaging the expert diver—indeed, having my old friend Matt Bardeen in mind, I had expressly stipulated that this was to be my part. And although he was retired from active work, I had strong hopes of inducing him to don his harness once more. Nor was I disappointed; a hurry telegram brought him to City Island by the first train, and after briefly acquainting him with the matter in hand, Matt agreed to go along, furnishing all the necessary diving gear and two regular helpers.

We arrived off Santiago Bay at sunset on the night of October 30th, fifteen days from New York—which was sailing some. Indeed, for parts of the run we did better than many a tramp steamship in point of speed. We lay off that night, not caring to approach too near the coast in the dark.

For the last few days Bardeen and his mates, John Duke and Larry Peterson, had been busy overhauling their gear, and now that the time for beginning operations was at hand, he was very enthusiastic. All the information I had vouchsafed him in New York was that he was to endeavor to recover some sunken chests, which were believed to be valuable. He had been guaranteed his usual wages of ten dollars a day for himself and five dollars for each of his assistants, with the promise of a bonus of one per cent on the total amount recovered. It now became necessary to enlighten him further, and to the best of our ability acquaint him with the exact nature of his task. So, while I kept the deck, Mowbray and Bates sat down with him in the yacht's cabin and gave out the yarn. When the three of them came on deck Bardeen reported to me:

"There'll be no difficulty if Bates isn't mixed in his facts. We won't be able to take the yacht into the cave, of course, but the job can be managed from the boats."

Dawn found the *Lassie* about ten

miles off the high coast of Cuba, under the dandy and two jibs, the motor sparking bravely. The city of Santiago is not visible from the sea. I swept the high coastline with the glass, but could see no sign of life stirring—not a house nor a column of smoke.

"Better put the yacht close in, Mr. Denver," said the voice of Bates at my elbow. "I'll tike the wheel. 'Ow's the tide?"

"The Nautical Almanac gives us low water at noon," I answered, for I had looked it up the night before.

At half-past eleven—seven bells by ship time—Mowbray and I were standing by the wheel when the little Cockney said quietly:

"Look through the glass, two points on the lee bow, gents, an' you'll see th' ileyand—a pile o' yaller rocks an' clay topped by some pa'ms an' bushes."

We were doing about six knots, so it was only a little after noon when we were right abreast of the place, and could clearly make out with the naked eye the A-shaped cleft in the rocks marking the cave's entrance.

"What next?" I inquired, for now that we had arrived, Bates tacitly took command.

"Better drop the mainsail and jibs," said the sailor. "She'll lay quiet under the dandy an' fore-stays'l; if the wind backs on shore, start th' engine. We'll git the bloomin' boat over an' go call-in'." All this was done quickly, and in ten minutes the dinghy was bobbing alongside.

"'Oo's goin'?" queried Bates. We couldn't all go, of course, but Mowbray and I hung in the wind.

"Guess I'd better have a look," said Bardeen with a grin. "We'll want Bates to show the way. Suppose you join us, Larry? Mr. Mowbray can go next trip."

"That's all right," exclaimed Morry, so we three tumbled in and shoved off. Matt and I each took a pair of oars, Bates steering, as he alone knew the way. We put our backs in to it, as you may judge, and in a few minutes the sailor gave the word! "Easy all!" and we merely paddled.

There was luckily no surf, merely a slow heaving of the blue Caribbean. Scarcely had he said the word than the

dinghy shot between two almost perpendicular walls of wave-worn rocks, and instantly we were plunged in a gray twilight. The sudden transition from brilliant sunshine to gloom was startling.

"Vast rowing," said Bates, and we held our oars suspended in the air; the silence was so profound that we could hear the water dripping from the blades. Matt Bardeen fumbled in the stern for a few moments, and then the cheery light of an electric torch somewhat dispelled the blackness. The narrow entrance behind us gleamed like a slit of silver.

"Wait half a mo'," growled Bates, and as he spoke he struck a Coston light on the toe of his sea-boot, and by the unearthly light of the bluish-white flame we could make out the area and dimensions of the cavern. The walls and roof were formed of smooth rock, pitted all over with little holes; the interior resembled nothing so much as the half of a bubble or bladder, and it instantly occurred to me that this was the "blow" or vent of some long-extinct volcano. The black water went in oily folds to the encompassing walls which it lapped in noiseless caress urged by the heavings of old ocean outside. I shivered involuntarily, for the atmosphere was damp, cool, and tomb-like.

Bates was the first to break the silence. "Tell yer wot—I was properly scared wh'n I first come in 'ere. But you'll soon git used to it."

"Where's the chests?" inquired the practical Bardeen.

"Give way, an' I'll show yer," rejoined Bates. A dozen strokes of the oars brought us to the furthest reach of the cavern from the slit of light at the entrance, and getting his bearings by that, the sailor exclaimed:

"They should be right under us now."

"I'd like to take some soundings," said Matt drily, shipping his oars and producing a lead-line, which he dropped over the side and quickly hauled up. By the light of the lantern we crowded our heads together to read the fathom marks.

"Ten fathom," exclaimed Bardeen. "That aint so bad." We shifted the dinghy, and he took repeated casts of

the lead in a radius of perhaps a hundred feet from the walls of the cave. The depth was pretty uniform, ranging from eight to twenty fathoms—roughly fifty to a hundred feet—the water shoaling, the nearer we approached the walls.

"Now put us right over where you say them cases is," commanded the diver, so we sent the boat ahead a few strokes until Bates gave the order "way 'nough!"

"Now, drop the lead!" said Bates hoarsely as the dinghy came to a stand. The crucial moment was at hand which might prove to him either a liar or a deluded fool. The lump of metal plopped into the water and the lead-line ran out between Bardeen's fingers. But only for a few ticks of the watch. Either it was much shallower here, or—

I kept the boat spinning on her keel, working either oar in obedience to Bates' motions. In all Bardeen took perhaps a dozen soundings—always with the same result—getting depths of from four to six fathoms within a very narrow radius.

"Well?" was my almost whispered query.

"There's something down there, sure enough," admitted Matt. "Let's go aboard and get the gear."

"Course there's something down there," retorted Bates. "Haven't I bin tellin' yer so right erlong?"

"We wont have time, this tide, to do any grapplin' or histin'," said Bardeen to me, not noticing the retort, "unless we want to spend the night in the cave—which I don't. But there'll be time for me to go down and have a look." Regaining the *Lassie*, I briefly gave Morry the results of the exploring trip.

"Do you think it's really there?" he inquired.

"We'll know in a little while now," I answered, non-committally. "Bardeen's going down right away."

Meantime the diver had given some quick orders. Our largest boat, a handsome gig, was slung over the side, into which his two mates carefully stowed the air-pumps, storage batteries for the electric torches, and their lighter gear. In fifteen minutes Matt reappeared on deck—a grotesque and gigantic figure clad in a baggy rubber suit trimmed

with burnished metal neck-rings and joints, his helmet of shining copper and plate-glass glittering bravely in the tropic sun, his feet shod with gunmetal, while in his hands he bore two massive back and breast plates.

The clumsy and unwieldy bulk was helped over our low side into the waiting boat—which was larger than either of the dinghys; the diver's helpers took the oars, Bates himself keeping the tiller.

"There's room for one more," called out Bardeen through the raised visor of his helmet.

"You go this time, Morry," I said. "We can't both leave the ship, and I've seen what it's like.

"All right," he assented, and in a jiffy was over the side. They were gone about an hour, and the westering sun was visibly on a slant for the horizon, when I spied the boat poking her nose out from between the cleft rocks. She came on at a good pace, Bardeen sitting in the bow facing forward with his helmet off for coolness. I could barely wait for them to hook on alongside, and I yelled as I hung over the rail:

"Well, what's the news from Davy Jones?"

"Bates was right—at least—" Morry began, when Matt cut in:

"The cases is there, Larry, piled any old way, jest as they was dropped overboard! What's inside 'em—why we'll know more about that to-morrow. But they're heavy, I can tell you that much, an' in pretty good condition, I guess."

That night around the cabin-table we discussed plans for raising the cases on the morrow. Unfortunately, we could not count on there being more than three or four hours' low tide when access and egress to and from the cavern would be possible for the small boats, and probably four or five trips would be necessary.

However, this was the plan decided upon by Bates and Bardeen, who both knew exactly how to proceed. One dinghy and the gig would be lashed together, and a staging of planks laid across so as to form a platform on which to rig up a small derrick. The other dinghy would be used as a tender, and as fast as the cases were raised they

were to be transported to the yacht immediately. In the event of rough weather, all hands were to turn to the yacht, to avoid disaster; either myself or Morry, with the Jap, were to remain on board while the others were in the cave. Matt Bardeen would, of course, descend, attach the requisite tackle or slings to the cases under the water, while the men on the staging above would hoist them on signal. It was also arranged that one boat with the heavier gear might safely be left in the grotto over night until the job was done.

Well, everything worked like a charm. Bardeen grappled two of the chests that first afternoon and sent them on board by Bates and Morry, the big diver and his men following in the other boat. We got the cases on deck and below in a jiffy. They were slippery with sea-slime, crusted with barnacles, and trailing with tropic marine growths. But they were apparently sound as when built—perhaps tougher, for teak grows hard as iron under water, and the copper clamps and rivets could not rust off.

You who read may imagine that we were wild to come at the contents. Each chest fastened with a lock, but we had no keys, so there was nothing for it but to pry off the lids with wedges and crowbars. And a mighty job it proved, for the chests after a submersion of nearly a century, were tough nuts to crack.

But at length there was a mighty creaking and cracking and the ponderous top swung back. We crowded around, and this is what we saw:

The chest was lined with lead, and divided vertically into eight square divisions by heavy partitions. A dull glitter rose from the contents, for every compartment was filled to the brim with minted money, gold and silver, Spanish reales, Mexican dollars, and coins of various South American Governments, which none of us recognized. Each pocket was devoted to one particular kind of money, and the chest was filled with about equal parts of gold and silver. The coins were scarcely tarnished.

We gloated in silent amazement. Bates was the first to speak. Fetching Bardeen a mighty thump on the back, he exclaimed:

"Now, you bloomin' unbeliever, what're yer got t' s'y?"

"You win, Mr. Bates," said Matt, offering his hand. "If the other cases pan out as rich as this one, we can all go a-fishin', I guess."

The second case proved to contain nothing but silver money, packed very closely just as though the stuff had newly come from the mint. It was impossible to estimate the worth of the two cases, and besides there were several others yet to be heard from whose contents might be even more valuable.

There is no need to weary you with a detailed account of the next three days' doings. The fine weather continued, and we were not disturbed by any passing vessels. Trip by trip Matt Bardeen dived, grappled, and sent eight more chests to the surface, which were duly rowed on board the *Lassie* and stored below. But we were not able to get away without a tussle, certain of us literally escaping by the skin of our teeth.

The morning of the fifth day off Bates' islet found us with the cases aboard and, as Bardeen reported, only two more to be raised. The tide served us early, it being low water at half-after eight. It was my turn to go along, Mowbray remaining aboard with the Jap as boat-keeper. Well, according to routine, Matt shifted into his diving rig in the cabin, and we rowed smartly for the cave, where we found the dinghy left behind over night as usual, lying motionless on the sullen water inside.

Bardeen and his mates lost no time getting the gear in order, for now that the end was in sight we were all anxious to up anchor and away. When all was ready—the short sea-ladder dropped over the side of the staging, the air-pumps tested, and the storage-batteries ascertained to be in working order—Matt's head-piece was screwed on, back and chest plates adjusted, and he disappeared into the black depths amid a ring of bubbles, while the wheels of the air-pump instantly set up their steady drone.

In a few minutes a dull radiance floated up from the ocean floor of the cave, indicating that the diver had switched on the electric lamp fixed in the top of his helmet, and was busy ad-

justing slings and grapnels to one of the remaining chests.

Suddenly the surface water began to eddy and heave, rocking the boats as though they were in the swell of a steamer. The life-line and the air-hose swayed hither and yon, yet the former was not agitated by any of the usual signal pulls. Something out of the ordinary was going on in the dark and mysterious void of this uncanny Caribbean sea-cave!

We watched the swirling and boiling surface in fascinated amaze. Life-line in hand ready to sense the expected signal, Bardeen's mates maintained the steady, rhythmic pulse of the pumps—for upon a regular supply of air the life of the diver depended.

"Wot's h'up?" demanded Bates in hoarse astonishment.

Almost as he spoke there came three quick pulls on the line, Bardeen's signal that he wanted to be hauled to the surface. We heaved with a will, as you may imagine, but found it difficult to budge the man at the other end.

In some mysterious way his weight was enormously increased.

"He can't be foul of anything down there!" grunted one of the helpers. "Heave steady an' don't jerk, or the line'll part!"

Still the horrid turmoil of the water went on; had there been light enough I have no doubt that we should have seen it roily with muddy slime or sediment. The nearer we drew Bardeen's bulk to the boat, the more violent grew the unseen struggle.

"What is it?" I shouted, holding an electric torch high overhead. The answer came in a totally unlooked-for fashion, for suddenly there flashed out of the dark water something sinuous, wavy, grayish white and slim—a long tentacle, in fact, thick as a man's arm, which fell right across the gig and clung there. A second and a third followed, one writhing about the air-pump, and another getting a strangle-hold on my thigh, effectually pinning me down to the thwart on which I had been kneeling.

In an instant the truth flashed across me: Bardeen had been attacked by an octopus! The three tentacles we had to

deal with were each at least ten feet in length, studded with saucer-like suckers, proving that the monster was one of the largest and most deadly of its kind.

"Get the ax!" I yelled, "and chop the devil loose! Keep firm hold of that life-line!" For in their sudden fright both of Bardeen's mates had toppled backward when that wicked-looking tentacle writhed itself around the pump-gear.

The position of our brave diver was most horrible. Doubtless the octopus had laid in wait for its prey, lurking in some cranny or crevice of the rocks, springing upon Bardeen without warning and instantly enveloping him in its suffocating and crushing embrace. His struggles to escape accounted for the disturbance of the water which we had seen and wondered at. Unless we could get him to the surface and kill the creature he stood a pretty fair chance of losing his life!

All this happened in considerably less time than it takes you to read about it. Quick as thought, almost, Bates whipped a wicked-looking sheath-knife, sharp as a razor, from his hip, and began hacking and stabbing at the quivering twin tentacles which clung to the boat. While he was about this, one of Matt's mates got busy with the only ax in our outfit, and literally chopped away the third shiny arm.

But all this while poor old Bardeen was under water hanging suspended between the surface and the bottom, encircled by the pitiless, crushing arms of the octopus.

"Quick, men!" I shouted. "We must get him to the surface before it's too late!"

I had read somewhere that the giant squid is comparatively powerless unless it can attach itself to some firm anchorage by means of its tentacles, and as Bates and the others severed the grisly arms from the mass which was yet out of sight and under water, we felt the burden at the end of the life-line slowly coming our way.

Hauling carefully, yet in feverish haste, we got the unwieldy form of the diver alongside the staging. We were horrified to see that Bardeen was lying on his side, completely enwrapped and encircled by the snake-like folds of his

horrid foe, while the great white central body of the squid was fastened on his back, two baleful eyes glaring up at us, while a wicked-looking, parrot-like beak protruded from the center of the mass.

Our first task was to attack the octopus, literally cutting the tentacles away. For this our knives were our only weapons; we dared not use the ax, neither could we harpoon or shoot the monster in the vital spot, under its cruel beak, for fear of injuring Bardeen.

We worked like demons, hacking at the tough tentacles, severing them as near to the squid's body as possible, and tearing the fragments away from the rubber diving-suit. To accomplish this we were compelled to roll Matt over and over, like a cask, being careful, the while, not to foul the air-hose, and I wondered whether he'd understand what we were about.

After what seemed an eternity, although the time elapsed was in reality not more than three or four minutes, we managed to sever the last clinging tentacle. Thus rendered powerless for further mischief, and deprived of its hold, the disgusting white mass disengaged itself and sank out of sight.

In thirty seconds more we had dragged Bardeen to the raft, unscrewed his head-piece, and to our great delight found him, purple in the face, yet alive—and madder than a wet hen!

The fresh air and a pull at my flask speedily set him on his feet. The instant he was able to talk he explained that the octopus had "climbed all over him" while he was in a stooping posture; from the moment of attack he guessed what had happened, having, as I knew and the reader will remember, been through a similar experience off the coast of California. He kept his senses throughout, and had been able to follow all our movements for his rescue.

As you may imagine, there was no more diving that day. When we rowed aboard and gave Morry Mowbray the yarn he promptly voiced the opinion that we'd done enough—to which Bates responded with a hearty "Aye, aye, sir!" So we resolved to make sail with the ten cases already safely stowed under the hatches.

We had "got away with it!"



The Black Mask

By

HORACE HAZELTINE

THAT the little box-vestibule hall of my bachelor apartment should be in darkness *did* strike me as odd, since it was my habit on going out of evenings, to leave it lighted; but then I remembered that Manson, my visiting valet, was to have called, and I assumed that it was he who had economically turned off the current on departing. When, however, I had fumbled for and found the little enameled push-button beside the door, and had pressed it hard without result, I came naturally to the conclusion that the fault lay not with Manson, but with the electric lamp, which had evidently parted a filament in my absence. I was, therefore, not at all discomposed by any sense of the unusual as I groped my way through the curtained doorway into the impenetrable murk of my square sitting-room. Hence all the more startling was the sudden, blinding glare of light, which, like a bolt out of the black, struck me squarely in the face.

I think I must have staggered back a step, as from the impact of something tangible. Then, instantly, all was black again, and I realized that I had been viewed and measured by some nefarious invader with a pocket search-light. In the ensuing second I strained my ears to detect some guiding sound as to his location, only to be further astounded by the rich, full tones of a woman's voice, speaking with calmest assurance. "Might I trouble you, sir, to switch on the overhead electrolier? The disk is just behind you."

Instinctively, I obeyed, and, as the center lights flushed full and strong in the full tide of their effulgence, I beheld

standing erect and imperious, a sumptuously beautiful feminine figure, wearing a somewhat daringly-cut evening gown of rich, sable velvet. Her perfectly moulded shoulders and arms gleamed dazzlingly white by contrast under the electric lights, but her hair was hidden by an all-enveloping turban-like head-dress, black too, and elaborately jet-garnished. That, however, which removed her from the usual, wrapping her, as it were, in an atmosphere of the exotic, giving to her, indeed, a savor of outlawry, was the fact that she was masked. From brow to chin, her face was covered by a black, silken domino.

Into the brief moment of silence, as I stood regarding her, there broke jarringly, the note of a clock, somewhere, striking two; and in spite of her apparent self-possession, I observed that my visitor started slightly at the sound. As for myself, I chose the instant to remove my hat, which I realized I was still wearing.

The removal took rather the nature of a bow, and I followed it with a salutation.

"You have, Madam," I said, courteously, "an advantage of me, which you are evidently disposed to retain; nevertheless, if your mask is not absolutely compulsive, you will oblige me infinitely by removing it."

Polite as I meant to be, I could detect resentment in her manner, if not in her words, as she replied:

"Not under any circumstances, sir, shall I reveal myself. My call here, as you might naturally infer, is hardly social. It is one of business, purely."

"Still," I persisted, smiling, "I see no

reason why business and pleasure should not be linked. May I, at least, ask you to be seated?"

But she neither acceded to my suggestion nor acknowledged it.

"I have come for money, Mr. Carteret," she announced, bluntly. "And I propose to get it before leaving."

"Need I say that I fancied as much?" I responded, affably. "Though your costume is eminently impeccable, your mask and your little electric flashlight are distinctly predatory." And, nonchalantly, for I was now quite amused, I proceeded to divest myself of my overcoat.

"To be quite frank with you, Mr. Carteret," she pursued, "I am in desperate need."

"A not unusual condition with extravagant young women in these days," I hastened to retort.

Once more she stood erect. Her head was lifted now, defiantly. Disregarding my observation, she continued:

"My husband has been detected in a defalcation."

"And your idea is that I make it good?" The situation was becoming humorous.

"A part of it; it is the balance, we lack. You are to give me fifteen thousand dollars."

"But why come to me?" I asked.

"Because I know you are a gentleman. I know that you are too much of a gentleman to make a scene—to attempt to have me arrested. Exposure, don't you see, would only make bad worse. I had to be very sure of the character of my prey, before stalking it." I could fancy her smiling behind her mask.

"You are indeed most flattering," I returned, with a smile that held some cynicism. "Am I to infer that we have met before, under less unconventional circumstances?"

"I know you by reputation," she replied, noncommittally.

She had clasped her hands lightly in front of her now, and I observed for the first time that she wore no rings. Coincidentally I noted that she was without any jewelry whatsoever. I was casting about for some mark of identification, some smallest clue that might lead to recognition, for somehow I had been impressed from the very first, that she

was not wholly a stranger. Women are so alike, though, in these days—they group so in classes, and lack so in individuality—that, with faces hidden, it is a difficult matter to distinguish one from another of the same type. In my present perplexity, therefore, I had to depend almost altogether on the voice and gestures of my interesting intruder to guide me to her identity. And neither one nor the other was at all enlightening. I knew, perhaps, a score or more of women of the general type of this one—one in particular, indeed, I knew intimately—and yet, in the characteristics I have mentioned, she was like no one of them.

"Have I the reputation of giving thousands of dollars to beautiful masked strangers, just for the asking?" I inquired, leaning back and thrusting my hands into my trouser pockets.

I saw her eyes flash wickedly through the narrow slits in her domino.

"I had no idea you would give it just for the asking," she shot back at me. "I am prepared to enforce my demands." And with this she turned, and lifted from the table behind her a neatly wrapped and somewhat bulky parcel, about a foot square.

"Good heavens, Madam!" I cried in mock alarm. "It isn't a bomb, I trust!"

"I trust I shall not have to use it," was her grave response. "If I do, it will cause an explosion that you will hardly relish, I imagine."

I was certainly at a loss to catch her meaning. My conscience was reasonably clear; there was no skeleton in my closet that I feared might be exposed to public view. Musing a moment, my eyes roved, and roving, missed from my mantel and walls the little collection of autographed photographs of society and stage beauties, which, since my engagement to marry, I had retained because of their decorative effect rather than for any sentimental reason.

When I addressed my visitor there was chiding in my tone.

"You've stripped the room of its pictures," I exclaimed.

"And your desk of its letters," she confirmed with an addition. "They will all be vastly interesting, I dare say, when I show them to Miss Ada Emory."

Up to this point I had regarded the experience as rather diverting; had, in fact, at no time taken it at all seriously; for I felt that when the interview began to grow tiresome, I should have small difficulty in getting rid of my uninvited guest. Her mention of the name of my *fiancée*, however, shed a new and forbidding light upon the episode—gave it the appearance of threatened blackmail.

At the words I sprang up, and with a suddenly grave face, advanced towards her. Whereupon she thrust the parcel again behind her, and folding her arms, confronted me with an air of determined defiance.

"It seems to me, Madam," I said firmly, "that this little farce has gone quite far enough. Whatever your object was in coming here, you have failed in it. And now I must ask you to go, and at once."

For answer, she laughed behind her mask.

"You mean," she gurgled, "that you decline to let me have the amount I have asked for?"

"Most assuredly," I declared with emphasis.

"Very well then; your treasures go with me." But as she started to gather up my wrapped belongings, I caught her hand with a grip that arrested her.

"All you will take, is what you brought with you," I said, firmly. But at the same moment I experienced a strange sense of subliminal suggestion. To my surprise, the young woman made very feeble protest. I had expected her to resent my hand-clasp, to charge me with rudeness, to struggle frantically to be free. Instead, she accepted the inevitable with an astonishingly good grace. Her hand was permitted to lie softly and warmly in mine for the space of several seconds, and her sole retort was:

"If you are a gentleman, sir—"

I had noticed that her cloak and gloves lay on a chair near the curtained doorway to my bedroom; and now, releasing her, I moved to get them. As I turned with them in my arms, however, it was to face a fresh sensation. *Milady Raffles* was covering me with a revolver.

It was not a very formidable looking

weapon, to be sure, but it glittered menacingly under the electric lights, and the abruptness of its disclosure was certainly startling.

"You are very good," she said, with chill politeness, "but I shall have to trouble you first to call a taxicab for me."

And at this an idea was born. Bowing acquiescence, I returned her things to the chair, and stepped to the telephone.

"Give me 9206 Schuyler, Central, please!" I directed.

My back was now of necessity to my feloniously inclined visitor, but I was sure that I heard her shift nervously her position at the naming of that number.

For once the service was reasonably prompt, and the next minute I was saying:

"I wish to speak to Miss Emory. I know it's very late, but tell her it's Mr. Carteret, and it will be all right."

I heard my masked companion's voice rise in quick, excited objection. She was commanding me to drop the receiver, at once; threatening to press the trigger instantly, if I delayed. My obedience was apparently precipitate; yet I should have gained nothing by refusal. Already, over the wire, had come to me the information that Miss Emory was not at home.

"And now," I asked, as I turned about once more, "which is it that you would really prefer? The money or the rubbish that you have tied up so carefully?"

She seemed rather taken aback by this question, and for a breath was silent. Then, with a light laugh that was palpably artificial, she said:

"Of what earthly use would your letters and photographs be to me, sir, except as a means to getting the sum of money that is so vitally necessary?"

"Very well, then," I said, yielding with as good a grace as I could command, "you shall have what you desire. Unfortunately I do not happen to have here that amount in cash. It will be a matter of a very few minutes, however, to get it from the Night and Day Bank. Will you pardon me while I ring for a messenger and write a check? And pray," I added in my most persuasive tone, "do oblige me by taking a chair meanwhile."

This time, seemingly relieved, she did as I asked, but in a position that commanded my every movement. I took care, therefore, having summoned the messenger, to display rather ostentatiously my pocket check book, as I sat down at the writing-table.

Could the fair watcher have seen what I wrote, though, I am sure she would have been less calmly composed than she was.

Deftly I enclosed the slip of paper in an envelope, taking good care that she should get no glimpse either of its inscribed side or the address to which I was sending it.

When the boy arrived, she considerably turned her back to the door; but, as I met him in the hall, giving my instructions in a whisper, this was scarcely necessary.

After his departure, silence fell between us for a little. And in that space my thoughts were busy. I had been cautioned more than once, by well-meaning, but tactless, friends, against marrying an actress; but I had all along maintained that Ada Emory was not to be considered with the erratic, whimsically temperamental majority, but in a class quite by herself; a *rara avis*, indeed, in that she combined with exceptional histrionic talent all the admirable qualities of the perfect woman, together with a most winsome personality and dazzling beauty.

To say that jealousy is a corollary of true love, is to tell a twice-told tale; but it applies in the present instance, nevertheless. I had no doubt of Miss Emory's warmest affection; but, likewise, she left no question in my mind as to her abundant, nay absorbing, jealousy.

In my heart of hearts, I knew that whatever there may have been between the originals of the autographed photographs and myself, it was long ago over and done with; and the same was true of the writers of the letters in my desk drawer. At the same time it would require a deal of argument, I feared, to half way convince Ada of these truths. It would take time, too, and time was, just at this juncture, not any too plentiful. Already she had retired from the stage; already we had secured our license to marry; and the day set for

our quiet little wedding was less than a week distant.

I chide myself, now, for not having long ago destroyed these evidences of old loves; more than once I had meant to do so, deferring the actual performance purely through indolence. And now I was being called on to pay the exorbitantly expensive penalty.

It was my insatiate caller who eventually broke the brief spell of silence.

"I may as well tell you, Mr. Carteret," she said, with something of conciliation in her tone, "that I have not made so bold as to read any of your correspondence. I took, however, only letters addressed in unmistakably feminine hands."

"That was, indeed, good of you," was my sarcastic rejoinder. "Though, as the matter has shaped itself, it really makes very little difference to me what you have read or what you have selected. If I have sent for the money for you, it is not because I fear what you may do either with the correspondence or the pictures. As a matter of fact, you are quite welcome to take them with you when you go. You are quite at liberty, too, to deliver them into the hands of my *ex-fiancée*, Miss Emory, if you feel so inclined."

"Your *ex-fiancée*!" she exclaimed, with a note of surprise.

"My *ex-fiancée*," I repeated. "I am not the sort of a man that brooks deception, and when one breaks one's word with me, I am sure to resent it. Miss Emory gave me her promise, this evening, to remain in her apartment. She was threatened with a cold, and I desired her to protect herself. You may fancy my surprise and annoyance, therefore, when on calling her up just now, I learned that she had gone out in a taxicab, shortly after midnight."

The lady straightened abruptly in her chair. "I never imagined you were such a martinet," she declared, with that light, nervous laugh again. "Since you heard this, and are so incensed that you are going to break your engagement on account of it, doesn't it strike you as rather inconsistent, that you are about to present me with fifteen thousand dollars?"

"Oh, no, not at all," I replied. "Quite

the contrary, in fact, since I am doing this, not through force, but because of my profound appreciation of your attitude as a true and noble wife. A woman who is so devoted to her husband as to take the tremendous risk you have taken to-night, to save him from the just penalty of his crime, is so wonderful a creature in these days of light regard of the marriage relation, that she deserves success."

"You mean," she hastened, "that you do not believe Miss Emory would do as much for you, under similar conditions?"

"God forbid that similar conditions could ever be possible," was my rejoinder. "Yet, frankly speaking, the woman who holds promises so lightly before marriage, is not likely to attach much importance to the marriage vows, themselves."

"You have never broken a promise to her, I suppose?"

"Never. I should despise myself if I had."

"Have never deceived her in any way, I suppose?"

"Never," I asseverated, with some emphasis.

"You told her the truth about where you were going to spend this evening, I assume?"

"Undoubtedly. I said I had an engagement at the Bar Association, which would keep me quite late."

"Did you tell her that the engagement was with a woman—a very pretty woman?"

The question astonished me. How was it possible that my odd visitor knew of the client with whom, for three hours that evening, I had been closeted? Here had I been confidently congratulating myself on my clever handling of the present situation, and now, in a twinkling, I was cast into a veritable slough of perplexity by this revelation of knowledge so utterly unexpected and inexplicable.

My dismay must have been apparent, for Milady seemed to bristle with her advantage. "Ah, ha!" she exulted. "You didn't tell her anything of the sort. That is very evident. You led her to believe it was a man you were to meet! Didn't you?"

"My dear Madam," I retorted, with a warmth kindled by discomfiture, "what I told her, or what I led her to believe, can be of no earthly concern to anyone but ourselves, and I decline to be catechised on the matter further."

If my words were discourteous, her laugh, which followed, was contumelious. And the worst of it was that I felt the rebuke was deserved. I made haste, therefore, to make amends.

"My interview with my client was of a purely professional nature," I explained. "Any sensible woman would understand that. Between lovers a degree of confidence is a necessity."

"Very true," she agreed. "Therefore don't you think that before calling your engagement off, it would be well to hear Miss Emory's excuse for disobeying your commands?"

"There can be no excuse," was my emphatic declaration.

"The sudden illness of a friend, perhaps," she suggested.

"That is not likely," I temporized.

"Yet possible," she insisted.

"Oh, possible, of course," I admitted.

She seemed satisfied to have won out in her argument, and when next she spoke, it was on another subject.

"Hadn't you better call that taxicab for me?" she asked. "You know they take some time to respond."

"But for you to leave my rooms at this time of the morning will be terribly compromising," was my objection.

"I shall put a veil over my mask," she informed me.

"But how will that help me? You must remember that my *fiancée* is ridiculously jealous. Should she by any chance discover that a lady was seen to leave my apartment at half-past two in the morning—and what may one not discover, since even you know of my female client?—it is fair to presume that my fifteen thousand dollars would be quite thrown away. No," I concluded, "I insist that after I have given you the money, you shall remain here until a perfectly respectable hour for leaving. I shall put my rooms at your entire disposal, and go, myself, to a hotel."

"Why, how simply ridiculous!" she exclaimed, in evident annoyance. "I couldn't possibly remain here, accepting

your hospitality. Surely in forcing you, at the point of a pistol, to hand me such a sum of money, I have sufficiently imposed upon your good offices."

"Ah, but I insist," I said. "Either you stay or I order two taxies, and follow you home. For, don't you see, if I should be held to account for this little episode, I must be prepared to demonstrate, through you, my absolute innocence."

Milady Raffles appeared in great perturbation. She sprang to her feet and crossed the room to one of the windows which looked out on the Avenue. The curtains were drawn, of course, but in seeming fear of her purpose, I cried out: "Don't. Don't show yourself at that window. I implore you."

She turned, quickly, and retracing a step or two, declared:

"To permit you to know my name and residence, you must understand is quite out of the question. For me to accept the shelter of your rooms is equally so. Therefore, I ask you again to order for me a conveyance."

"You appear most ungrateful," I reminded her. "My future happiness appears as nothing to you."

But she utterly ignored my observation.

"Isn't it nearly time that messenger returned?" she asked. "My husband will be growing impatient."

I took my turn now; I ignored her question.

"I'll compromise with you," I said, with an engaging smile. "I'll order a taxi for you, if you'll remove your mask."

"Not under any consideration," was her answer.

"Because we have met at some time? Because I would recognize you?"

"Because we *may* meet at some time," was her guarded response.

Even as she spoke, the door-bell rang, sharply, and I rose promptly to its summons. As I left the room, I observed that she had resumed her seat, and was sitting with her back to the hall; her mask was hidden, as it had been before.

I had counted on the lad not returning alone, and I had not counted in vain. I grasped his companion's hand and spoke to him in a whisper. Then, as I led him quietly into the sitting-room,

the messenger following, I think my face must have been one broad smile.

Milady had not changed her position; but, evidently entirely unsuspecting, presented still that rear prospect, which, with its graceful, sinuous lines and its effective combination, or rather contrast, of satin-white shoulders and arms and velvet-black gown, struck me as distinctly alluring.

I wish I were able adequately to describe that which followed, when, in a perfectly casual tone, I said:

"Ada, I want to present my old friend, the Reverend Mr. Gridley."

It seemed to me that a nervous tremor first shook her, as might a chill; upon which there followed an instant of panic indecision. Then, to my mixed gladness and doubt—for I still held some question as to the validity of my identification—I saw her hands raised quickly to her head and the disguising domino snatched off.

As she did this, she rose leisurely to her feet, and then, slowly, deliberately turned toward us. The moment of that turning, as I stood trepidly watching her, seemed interminable. But I had not been mistaken. It was she. And as I was thus reassured, appreciation of the marvelous piece of acting she had just performed, swept aside for the second all other considerations.

Her attitude now, her carriage, her manner of using her hands, were all quite distinctly different. And her voice, accent and intonation, when she spoke, were all those I so familiarly knew, and in no wise similar to those of my recent mysterious visitor.

To my gratification, she was smiling most affably, and I was sure she had never appeared more beautiful, nor to better advantage.

"I am charmed to meet you, Mr. Gridley," she said, extending a gracious hand. "It's an unconscionable hour for me to be calling, isn't it? But Mr. Carteret was out when I came, and I asked his man to let me wait for him."

I saw Dick Gridley's perplexity, and rushed, as it were, to the rescue.

"Then," I announced, blithely, "after I came home and found Miss Emory here, we talked matters over and decided to be married at once."

I admit it was rather an unfair advantage to take, and I more than half expected Ada to make vigorous denial; but to my delighted surprise, she just slipped her hand into mine, and said very sweetly:

"This is going the midnight marriage about three hours better, isn't it?"

Gridley informed us that we should have to have another witness beside the rather soiled-faced messenger, so I drafted for the office the sleepy night elevator boy. And the ceremony was performed in record time.

All the while, of course, I was avidly craving a season of mutual explanation with Ada; but it was irritatingly delayed. For, no sooner were we made husband and wife, than, at her suggestion, the grimy messenger was despatched for a make-shift wedding breakfast, from an all-night restaurant near by. And Dick Gridley was prevailed upon to stay for the collation.

When at length, however, we had eaten and drunken, and made merry withal, as is fitting for brides and bridegrooms to do, and the officiating clergyman had departed, and the pale blue light of dawn was peeping in between the curtains and making garish the glare of the electrics, I suspended the hymeneal kisses long enough to ask:

"Why on earth, dearest, did you choose to play this sensational little melodrama of the midnight marauder?"

"I didn't choose it at all, my dear," was her reply. "It was forced upon me. About eleven o'clock, some one called me up on the telephone, some one whose voice I didn't know, and who refused to give his name. He told me, however, that he knew of our engagement, and that he wanted to warn me against you. He said that he was divorcing his wife, and that you were her counsel; that you were with her, then, at the Bar Association, and that if I wished to make sure of your perfidy, I could find ample evidence here in your rooms, where her pictures were, he said, displayed, and her letters, doubtless, hidden."

"And you believed the scoundrel," I charged, more sad than angry.

"Oh, but I didn't believe him," she insisted, femininely. "I didn't believe him at all. But when I remembered the latch

key you dropped at my rooms, one afternoon, I thought what a lark it would be just to come here for the first time while you were out, and prove that wretched trouble maker an unqualified falsifier."

Of course I laughed. What else was there to do? She was perfectly sincere, and so deliciously ingenuous, that I hugged her very tight, and gave her two kisses of hearty approval, before asking:

"But the pictures you did find; and the letters? What about those?"

"As for the photographs," she observed, with an entrancing smile, "I'm not at all jealous of those back numbers. I know most of them, and the others are too horribly homely to give me any concern. As I told you, I didn't read the letters. But I carefully examined all the postmarks, those of the letters in feminine hands especially, and I found that all of them bore dates either before I knew you, or very shortly after. So just as a joke on you I determined to bundle up the lot, and take them home and burn them."

"And I suppose the mask and the pistol were to test my courage?"

"Oh, not at all. I simply brought the mask along for a disguise, and the pistol for protection, in case of surprise; and you surprised me. I became interested and over-stayed my time. Then, I had to invent some excuse; and the first thing I thought of was the defaulting husband. How I did laugh to myself when you called the messenger and, as I thought, wrote the check!"

"But you know now, of course, that I knew you all the time."

"You didn't," she contradicted, hotly. "You didn't know until you called up my home. I lost my poise there for just a moment, and you detected it."

"Before that," I insisted, "long before that."

"You couldn't," she claimed. "I never gave a sign before that. I am sure I didn't."

Before I proved my words I laid my lips once more upon hers.

"Lovers, my dear," I said sagely, "have more means of penetrating disguises than have the less favored. I knew you beyond all mistaking, sweetheart, when—our hands touched."



The Tale of the Privileged Private

By PAUL H. HARRIS

FOR the benefit of all the "old timers" under MacArthur out Luzon way—to whom the great tragedy of Kalabong has always been a mystery—this yarnlet is spun. It might prove of interest to thousands who read the home accounts of that greatest Philippine scrap of them all, but mainly it is aimed as a memory jogger for those who made targets of themselves at fifty-two cents per working day of twenty-four hours.

"Tex" Tollman, Harry Sanford and "Little Eva" Walters did hold converse with me not these many days hence and the Great Tragedy was then reviewed. It so happened that for the first time was it possible to "release the big story," a recital which would have turned the eyes of a war correspondent green with envy in '99.

"Little Eva" told us the story that night after keeping it to himself for eleven years—which goes to prove that you cannot always tell just what a man is because he has a fat, talcumed face. We were all cooped together in a hot hotel room; through the open window came whanging the snarls of a great city; but thousands of miles were we transported from the din of the elevated; back on the wings of memory were we shunted to a mean, miserably pesky Island; thronged with adventurers pure and *insurrectos* vile; bakingly fascinating, beautifully unreal.

"I obtained my 'honorable' from the Twenty-First in '00," wheezed the fat raconteur—"character excellent; honor-

able wounds none, but I still retain some rather sear memories.

"For instance, are you aware of the fact that this is the anniversary of the battle of Kalabong?"

We three scouts for the elusive currency of the realm gazed reproachfully at the speaker.

"Yes, you do not," he responded to our looks, "and I can't blame you much, for it's hard sometimes even to remember the day Aggy was captured, but I don't think any of you will ever remember that date quite as fixedly as will I, for all that night I lay in a trench and fought mosquitoes and fear, two miles from our nearest outpost, scared to death; plumb farked. The next morning the line advanced and I rejoined my comrades at arms. It was on the night of this joyous reunion with my fellow sufferers from dobie itch that this rather unusual tale was spun to me by Captain Jimmy Steers. I was his orderly that day and when he called me in an hour before I was to be relieved and told me the whole tale I didn't stop to figure out the whys and wherefores; I merely appreciated that he was telling a pretty fierce sort of a secret to a man whom he knew he could trust. I was pretty well in on the know regarding the captured *insurrecto* fund which concerns the plot most materially; I had kept my memory well flattened out when the inspector snooped around; Cap Jimmy felt that I was a good scout; also did he fear that a stray goo goo bullet might take

him off the next day or the day thereafter, thereby causing dust to return to dust, as it were."

"Stow this around the elbow style, my fat friend," criticised Sanford.

"Hail the fleet footed varlet and I will," said "Little Eva;" "thinking of those hot days makes me thirsty."

"Well, to get down to cases," puffed the minstrel between gulps. "Cap Jimmy called me in his tent on the night of September 21st, 1899, and pointed to a camp-stool over by his bunk.

"'Sit down and listen, likewise forget,' he admonished. 'I don't feel like telling this to any of the officers and believe you're a pretty square sort of a little guy. If anything should happen to me, do what you think is best; if not, let it remain one of the secrets of the Service.' And when he mentioned Service it was in an awed, worshipful way no one but a West Pointer even attempts. I noticed his eyes were mighty shiny, but thought the kinks in his talk might have been due to a little too much Teutonic courage inducer. He talked rationally, however, and I have confirmed the details of the whole thing until I know all too well that it's true.

"'To-day a brother officer of mine was killed,' the Cap' continued, 'and no braver man ever lived. Drink to him, you fat slob, long rest his memory. General Naughton was one of the Lord's own; chosen was he from among many men to be the bravest. Hike after hike, has he gone through unscathed; no man who has ridden at his side as I have could help but be bettered thereby. And to-day, boy, he died an awful death, the most terrible passing of a hero ever written in the tablets set aside in the halls of fame for the truly great. You do not know it; some day a wondering world may, but I do; the surgeon does. The General was *shot in the back*.'"

"He leaned over close to me and whispered this in a mighty awe-striking way; as he said, I did not know where the General had been hit, the report had it that he was shot through the heart and was dead before he hit the ground. It was mighty gruesome in that drippy little old tent that night, listening to things like that being babbled by a half-bug-house, feverish West Pointer.

"'What would the world say about it?' he asked. - 'All unthinking, they would accept the distorted yarns of the hospital beats and faint hearted ones who have returned to Manila and told their tales of the General's fearful hikes over impossible country—of his disregard for his men, of his apparent seeking for the other star on his shoulder straps, caring not for the boys who fell out from sheer exhaustion. You know how the white livered curs can twist their damnable tongues, what a story it would make in a yellow journal back in God's country! And it's only a few like you and me, you corpulent loafer, durn your eyes! who know what an honest to gosh man he was, every inch of him, going in like a fire captain, never ordering a maneuver he himself would not head. And historical instances would be brought up to prove the analogy; they would compare him with foreign martinets who deserved their ill-gotten fame; but we who loved him, would give our right hands to know the truth.'

"He stopped rambling for a while and I gave him a shot of morphine. His staring eyes, that told of a broken heart, sobered; he talked in sequence, the strange story unraveled before me, the privileged private."

"'What would you say if I told you that the General had been shot by one of his own men? Would you believe it? I would hate to myself; I don't know, I don't know—' He stopped and debated the tale with himself; it was a full half hour before his jaw bones bulged with resolve and he relieved my now absorbing curiosity."

"'That trip I took to Manila cost a whole bunch of money,' he continued, 'and the worst of it was that I must have spent some of that accursed captured *insurrecto* fund. You remember that was the official purpose of my visit to headquarters; it was just after our big haul at Pozzorubbio, the time we captured the bunch of officers and twenty thousand pesos. Well, Eva, I don't know how it happened, but the first night I was in town I got mixed up in a saturnalia of crime which included a poker game at the Army & Navy. I cut up like a boy playing

hookey; my first taste of semi-civilization in months made a jackass of me, so that when I came out of it, two thousand pesos had become lost in the merry shuffle of champagne, cards and riding on rubber. I went around and turned in the little haul we had made at Pasig and brought the remaining eight thousand of the Pozzorubbio fund back here with me, intending to make it up within a couple of months, having some four hundred to collect from a couple of the officers, and two months' pay coming to me.

"Everything would have been fine and dandy but for that white collared snip of a Marling. You remember him? He's the little shavetail from the Inspector General's department who was detailed on active line duty in order to get material for a pamphlet proposing to settle the difficulties of field Quartermasters. Two weeks after he hit camp he came around and pounced on my books and walked through them with the unrespecting sleuthfulness common to his ilk. Everything would have been ship-shape except for one little slip of paper in the back of the Money Accountability ledger.' Captain Jimmy paused for a minute and I can assure all that you could have knocked me off that campstool with a feather.

"In a minute I knew what had happened; on a slip in the back of the ledger were some figures I had made up to help the captain strike a balance about two weeks before. He had confided in me at the time because he had thought I might be able to lend him enough to square it up. I was a pretty lucky gambler, and most generally had a reserve fund ready for the dusky gentlemen who thought they knew how to beat monte, but when he asked me for the kale I happened to be shy about a thousand of what he needed. I had won that on a hike the day before the big fight and lay there in that soaking trench all night, with Captain Jimmy's salvation fund in my pocket. If that snippy little rat had only waited a couple of days before he started that book investigation; well, if a great many things. The point was that the field inspector had discovered the Captain's shortage through the slip I had made up, the memorandum containing

the puzzling word Pozzorubbio opposite the tell-tale figures representing ten thousand dirty, captured, leaden dollars."

"He asked me about that slip you had made out for me,' went on Jimmy, 'and I dodged the issue by excusing myself for a few minutes. I went out to look for you and they told me you had been detailed on the point and were out in front then. I stalled him off that afternoon, hoping you would get back during the night. The General sent for me just before taps and I felt sure it was all off. Instead of that he asked me to have a chair, got reminiscent over his Arizona campaign with the Apaches, and took the occasion to thank me for the help I had been to him. He was always just a father to his staff members; peace again be unto his soul. While we were talking, in walked the snip. I could see the answer in his hard young face; there was no pity in his gloating eyes. However, before he had a chance to open his mouth the old man wheeled on him like a vicious old bull-dog.

"You're just the man I want to see,' he growled at him, 'return in an hour, Captain.' I took my leave and left that tent in fear and trembling. For the first time in my life I did a sneaking, key-hole trick. After making enough noise walking away to let them think I was out of hearing and sight, I sneaked back to the General's tent on my belly, yes-sir, like a bally eaves-dropper, for such I was. I couldn't resist it, for I felt sure that Marling would tell the General what he had found in my Money Accountability ledger. What do you think I heard? You dog-goned fat hound, I heard an old fire eater call down a white collared cur until said cur shriveled up and cried. The General told him that in the morning he was going to transfer him back to Manila and recommend a court martial for cowardice, yessir, *cowardice*. He told the poor snip that in the five scraps we had been in since he joined the regiment the snip had been faithfully in the rear; that he was a coward and no officer or a gentleman. And the cur just shriveled and sniveled and curled out of that imperious presence, pretty nearly stepping on me in his sobbing retreat. The mere fact that he

had not told his drear tale regarding my accounts was crushed out by the big other thing I heard, and as I lay there in the razor grass I thanked my stars that there was nothing worse against me than *lapsus peso*. The General was so wrought up over his tirade that he forgot to call me back to his tent that night.

"But there's one detail you must not overlook, Eva," he rambled on. "That night Marling kept his trusty typewriter working into the late hours. I heard him writing in his tent long past midnight, and dozed off to dream that he was writing a list of charges to prefer against me. This was the first typewriter ever seen on the firing line and I want you to remember it, for that little, portable, practicable toy, shiny and new, forms a big link in this story.

"This afternoon, during the hottest of the fight, the General swayed, turned a beseechingly questioning look on me and toppled off his horse a dead man. I will never know what prompted me to look around to the rear just then, but as I leaned to pick the General up I did look back and there I saw Marling fighting his horse's head. Together they disappeared in the dust and I turned to the saddest burden I have ever held in these arms. I didn't know at the time what made Marling and his horse stand out so prominently from the other units in the struggling, excited mob of disorganized soldiery, but they did, even to the exclusion of the great sorrow.

"After the scrap I made tracks for Marling's tent, inspired by I do not know what. It was empty except for his kit and accoutrements, as he had left them when we answered the bugle so suddenly that afternoon. In the center of the tent stood his folding table and on it was his clicking devil, the ever important little practical plaything, all shiny and new. From an unknown curiosity I lifted the carriage. Suddenly two lines imprinted on the new rubber roller jumped up and struck my rather benumbed brain. Here's what they were:

I see in his eyes that he knows I am a coward. I have fought it out with myself, but suppose I will have to kill him.

You must know what I thought in a minute; as a horrible brain-print, in all

its clearness came the memory of the frantic Marling out on the line.

"I waited for him to show up with the grimmest determination ever felt by man. Like a flash I reviewed the scandal of the thing and like a flash decided that he must suffer for his coward's deed. Incidentally I was methodical enough to pull my gun, for I felt sure he would make a fight for the telltale typewriter.

"He came in all dusty and shaking; in his eyes I saw the murder memory. Quickly I choked out my charge. He looked nonplused for a moment and when I pointed to the lines on the roller I can swear he turned livid. He stuttered for fully two minutes and then it seemed to me that his eyes narrowed in craftiness. Mind you, boy, I only say it seemed. Remember the "judge not unless ye be judged" adage, but also remember that the man was a yellow dog. And how do you suppose he explained it? Said that from the first he had been horribly gun shy; that the very sound of shooting made him tremble like a leaf; that try as he might he could not down the throat-clutching fear. And the most astounding part of it all was that he claimed the two lines referred to his horse; that the intelligent animal seemed to know its rider was a coward and watched for the breakdown that was sure to come; that the horse was an old warrior who knew every bugle call. He claimed a peculiar tropical obsession had overtaken him and that he felt sure he would never conquer his cowardice until he had gotten rid of the horse with the understanding eyes; and that he had killed him. The lines, he said, had been written over a page by mistake, before he knew that he was at the bottom of his paper, and that the page they belonged to were from his diary. He also told me that he felt sure the General would give him another chance if he made good that afternoon and begged on his knees that I keep to myself what I had heard the night before as I lay in the grass outside the tent.

"To make his story doubly strong he took me out a mile or so from camp and showed me his horse, shot through the head. I came back to camp with him, racking my poor brain for a way out;

the man doddering along beside me whimpering for mercy, swearing by all that was good and holy that he would make good and prove a credit to the service. Incidentally he offered to overlook my shortage for the time being. This and the look I had surprised back there in his tent decided me; the cur was too anxious. I kicked him away from me and came here to the tent to think it over. I had just about decided on my course and was getting ready to hunt up the adjutant when he plunged into my tent for one final appeal. I told him that I had decided on the only army way; he searched my face for hope, found none, rushed out into the night and killed himself. I heard the shot and sent the sentry over in its direction. He came to me with his gruesome burden and it now lies in state beside the martyred old man, ready for the last three volleys which are fired over hero and craven alike."

The speaker paused. Outside, the elevated banged and life sounded. Walters laid his hand on my shoulder and his voice trembled as he put the question.

"What do you think about it; you served under Naughton the Great; did he die by the hands of a brother officer or was he taken to his Maker through faulty shooting of an excited recruit?"

I could not answer at first, but gazed out at the automobiles and warring hackmen with unseeing eyes. The tell-

ing had been wheezingly graphic, all of us had been wafted to the land where hopes lay buried. Suddenly it occurred to me.

"Did you or Captain Jimmy look for Marling's diary?"

"Yes, but too late. A fire broke out in camp that night and destroyed the inspector's tent and belongings. The next day when we searched the ashes all that showed of the man was the, to me, mysterious little typewriter, now warped and burned, its telltale roller gone with its mystery. Captain Jimmy died of amoebic in Porto Rico the other day; that's why I tell the tale."

We all sat silent for a while. I happened to glance over at "Tex" and was much surprised to see that the gentleman from the land of vasty farms was engaged in much thought.

Suddenly he jumped to his feet with a yell.

"Don't forget me," he shrilly announced. "Remember that I was in that scrap too. Also, I happened to be behind Marling during the whole of the fight. He did not shoot his horse; his horse was hit from in front; Marling was too busy trying to pull the horse back out of the scrap to use either of his hands. This I know; for with mine eyes I saw it."

"I knew that, too," quietly answered "Little Eva." "Let's all go to a melodrama." And such was the tale of the Privileged Private.

The Brass Penny

By CHARLES D. CAMERON

I PASSED up the winding, whispering stairs that led from the street to the Sacred Pekin restaurant, kept by Li Chung Tang. The paper lamps, the gilded representatives of the Three Thousand Gods, the silken-robed and slippery waiters, the smoking incense

(common, drug-store olibanum) looked restful after the electric illumination and early-evening crash of down-town Chicago. And I needed to find a place where I could understand the people. America is my native land, and all my feelings are American. But my years in

the South Seas and the Orient had not helped me to success when I really had tried, in my own country.

I had hoped for eventual promotion in the Bank of the Interior. The west has no skill in trade like that of the Orient, and I had ideas of my own in this business. But this day I had learned that the Bank of the Interior was to absorb the Gulliver National, under our president, Acker Jonson. My position was to be abolished, and I was to have another not quite so good.

All this time I had kept my mind fixed, my heart set, on the one thing that held me to Chicago and to this continent, Elfie Abbott. I had met her in Chicago. She adored Chicago. She could not marry any man who would remove her from her aged parents, in Chicago. I had not dared to propose, yet I had not dared surrender her to the winds of the world. Some other man of brisk Occidental success, might claim the awaiting princess. So that evening I took my way to the Sacred Pekin restaurant, to be among people I could understand. My own people had baffled me.

Li Chung Tang, in his radiant robes, came to greet me. He loves me well. I knew him when he was a laborer in Java. Since then he had found his way through Vancouver port. Then he had been helped across the American border by hands invisible and strong. The Jack Lee of the Javan coaling station had become Li Chung Tang, an established resident of the Great Wide-Awake City. And I—had kept his secret. Therefore he loved me well; and I loved well the top-leaf tea he gave me.

"Many grand souls to-night have brightened my unworthy house," gabbled Li, as he led me through the palmy bowers and among the whirling fans. "Therefore I must put you, the brother of the Sun and Moon, with another of my divine guests. Behold, how many of your fellow-countrymen have deigned to taste the unworthy food of their worthless servant Li Chung Tang."

"It matters little to a poor devil like me," I said, in English, and my feelings made my language very much like

Chinese politeness. But Lee went on in his native tongue.

"Yonder is one of the least ugly of my wretched tables, and a chair perhaps less abominable than the others. So also is that gentleman quiet, and reading closely his newspapers. So the divine peace of you, my great and heavenly lord, will not be disturbed."

II

I bowed to the stately "Li Chung Tang," and sat down to wait for my top-leaf tea. On the opposite side of the table from me sat a Newspaper. That was all I saw, the great front of the *Chicago Tribune*, and two swarthy hands holding it open. Beside his plate was a pile of other papers. The dark hands fretted the *Tribune* nervously, and evidently the man behind the paper was scurrying up and down the columns. He turned the pages with a quick, noisy rustle, and kept scanning. At last he laid the *Tribune* down, and caught up the *Record-Herald*. I saw a man of very dark countenance, but regular, handsome, "Caucasic" features. "By the Seven Ports!" I thought to myself. "It's a Tahitian."

He looked at me a second while he changed papers. There was no interest or search in his glance, and he did not seem to note the stare with which I regarded him. He merely began, page by page, to scan the *Record-Herald*. His head bobbed up and down as he looked through the columns. A waiter brought him cassava cakes and coffee just as another brought me some German sour-rye bread and that adorable tea. They were prompt with me.

I reached in for a little change to tip the waiter. Li Chung Tang usually refused to take money for my refreshment, and this evening he had said he would not. The dark man was forced to lay by his paper for an instant while he paid his waiter. I pulled out some loose coins, and uppermost in my palm came a Little Brass Disk. Nothing but a little copper or brass piece, such as hotels use for coat checks or shaving checks, only this had no number or letter upon it. There was a little fretting,

or milling near the edges, but the sides were blank, and a hole was punched through near the edge. I had found it in the street that day, and carelessly had picked it up.

I gave the waiter a quarter, and slipped the rest into my pocket. I chanced to look across the table again. The dark man was glaring at me with a ferocious look in his close-set eyes. I wondered whether I had trespassed against some unknown Taboo, if indeed the man were a South Sea islander. But I buttered some rye bread and poured some tea. The man resumed his reading of papers, but now he occasionally glanced over or around the sheets at me. He let his cassava cakes go, but sipped his coffee intermittently.

The strange Polynesian appearance of my friend the Starer, deepened the blue color of my thoughts. Whenever I began to think I could not succeed very soon in the Chicago financial world, I began to ponder on the great need of white men far away; in the cocoanut plantations and on lonely pearl "farms" of the illimitable South seas. The death of both my parents had called me home from the ocean wilderness, where I thought success might soon be mine. Then I met Elfie, and Elfie held me anchored to Chicago.

I drank my tea. It was good. I looked at the Newspaper Reader vis-à-vis. He was bad, but interesting. He took me back to my look-out watches by night, on the steamers that run from Auckland up to Samoa, where they meet with the ships plying from Hawaii and the States, bound for the Fijis and Sydney. Again, that was good tea Li gave me. The man across the table brought back the nights of the Pacific, the weird lustre of the southern constellations, and the storms driving out of the hot night like the blazing battle-ships of heaven.

III

I began to long a little bit for the sight of more Polynesian faces. I thought I might like the man across the table just for being one, if he were one. I remembered, as he read the papers,

that Chicago was about to receive some Polynesian dignitaries. There was some secrecy about their visit, yet somehow banking circles knew about it, and knew the party was to stay at the Acropolis Hotel. I thought the fellow opposite might be in that mysterious delegation. But no—he would not be eating here alone.

He sighed, as he laid down the last paper. He stared again at me. I stared back. His was a handsome, regular European-like face, except for its dark hue and its abundant, crisp, jet-black hair. He suddenly leaned over and spoke to me, in one of those long, sing-song voices I knew so well.

"Sir! can you tell me where I might see his Majesty, the King?"

The whole story I had heard in the bank hummed in my memory. I did not know the King who was to come, nor did I know my interlocutor. I fenced.

"What do you wish from the King?" I asked.

"Merely to pay him my respects," he replied. "You will tell me where he is?" The last sentence was almost a command.

"No," I replied. That is the way I handle commands, except at sea.

He looked at me with grave reproof. "I—I regret your answer," he said.

"I'm glad you do!" I snapped. I pushed back my chair, and reached for my hat. Without a word he arose, showing six feet of muscular power, and prepared to go with me. I grinned at him belligerently. He looked at me only with severe, silent rebuke.

IV

So we passed down the winding, whispering stairs. "Will you wait one moment?" he asked me at the door. He spoke a fair English, the language of the mission schools. I am enough of a sailor to believe in taking whatever adventure life has to offer. I waited.

The Polynesian (as his questions had practically declared him to be) stayed at the door to light an ordinary cigaret. He had some trouble striking his match, though there was no wind. He struck five matches, and only the fifth

burned enough to be applied to the tobacco.

He turned to me. "The brass penny—give me that, sir!"

The tone was uncompromisingly masterful. I resented it, but answered lightly—"Oh, that's no good in this country. It would buy a cocoanut in Fiji, but—why do you want it?"

He dealt me a blow with all the strength of his arm, and I fell. Other blows, and the weight of several men hurling themselves upon me, and—unconsciousness.

V

I came to my senses with a heavy odor of fruit in my nostrils—the cloying fragrance of ripening bananas. Vague yellow and green clouds shook above me as my eyes glimmered into the light. I was in one of those cellar store-rooms in the Italian fruiterers' quarter, where hundreds of bunches of green bananas were ripening under the steady heat of gas. My eyes winked painfully at gas jets above. I was bound cleverly, and lying on a table, or perhaps a heap of boxes.

My recent table companion suddenly showed his dark face between me and the nearest gas light. I was ready to meet whatever was coming, and to have as good a time as possible.

"Hello, old man," I said, "Did you get the brass penny?"

He looked savagely at me with his close-set eyes.

"I took it, and more," he said. "Do you not know your King yet?"

"We do not call him King at our bank, we call him cashier," I replied.

"Ah, you work in a bank," he exclaimed. "Has the loan been made at some bank?"

"Lots of them at all the banks," I replied, laughing, but puzzled at the question.

The young man frowned in anger. Then he said in a Polynesian dialect I had not heard before, but which I partly understood from its resemblance to Hawaiian.

"I am the King of Manahita. I am Kalokiu. Surely you know Manahita?"

I began to see light and to connect

events. I began also to see my course, a direct one, but possibly perilous. All at once I had a duty in this matter.

"Manahita," I said, "is in longitude west 120°, latitude 20° south."

"I do not know all your sailor-language, but you seem to know of such a land."

"I went there in a sailing vessel once, tramping," said I. "Manahita is secluded in one of the by-paths of the ocean. Manahita City, as we saw it from the Leeward Gate, is one of the loveliest sights I ever beheld. We had peril getting in; a native pilot saved us."

"Yes, you know the place." There was a sneer in the words.

"Of course I know it!" I said. I did not know what else to do, so I kept on talking. "It is about 500 miles below the Panama-Auckland route. It is 4,400 miles nearly east from Fiji. It is south-east from Honolulu about 4,900 miles, and the nearest land is Ducie Island, about 500 miles."

The Polynesian spoke now with cold deliberation. He used English from now on, for I had used it.

"I doubt no longer that you are a citizen of Manahita. *Alao!*" There was a rattle as of revolvers behind, and I heard the rasping of many feet. Before that minute these had made no sound. Kalokiu and I might have been alone for all the noise they made.

"I am the King of Manahita," said Kalokiu. "You are a citizen of Manahita, as is shown by your knowledge of it, and your possession of the coin of the late King Otiusu. You are here as my prisoner. I have a right to take your life, to torture or to maim you. I can commit no crime, because our kingdom is recognized by Washington, and my rights are extra-territorial."

I really couldn't smile for a minute, much as I wanted to show the right kind of front. I did not know fully what Kalokiu wanted, but suspected he was after a blood sacrifice. Many of those island kings are accused of celebrating the old pagan rites in secret. I thought of Elfie. I was momentarily unnerved, not at dread of torture but at the sense of being cheated out of life just when life began to mean the most.

It was only a second. Kalokiu was

waiting for me to answer. "Say," I said, "we don't have monologues as long as that without side-business by the chorus."

The king's face was solid black wrath.

"I command you," he exclaimed, "to tell me at once the whereabouts of Charles Gomolani, who calls himself King of Manahita."

I remembered all. Gomolani was the name of the native pilot who had saved our lives at Manahita. Was he King now, by whirligig of island fortune? Then he must be the great dignitary who was to come to Chicago, and as all banking people for some odd reason knew, was to stay at the Acropolis hotel. I knew what to do, and what to say.

"I have you placed now, Kal, old horse," I said. "Gomolani has been here on a semi-secret trip. He has been in Washington. He is coming to Chicago. He is the real king of your islands. You're a plantation pirate."—I looked that highest of insults as I said it.

"Your words are dangerous to yourself," said Kalokiu. The English speech, the American clothes, concealed no longer the ruthless, savage warrior.

"Gomolani is my brother and my friend," I declared. "As far as King of Manahita goes, he's my king, too. I think I know where he is. I hope I am right. For I'm going to tell him that you're in town, and that he ought to have you arrested to take you back to the headsman at home."

Kalokiu was now a glowering desperado in appearance. He beckoned with his hand. Forward stepped a roughly dressed Polynesian, and lifted up a heavy horse-whip. He brought it down along my body with heavy, burning blows. The end of one lash cut my face. Blood began to dribble into my mouth.

I spluttered out at him. "You're no more King than a Chinese cook. You're a burglar. Where's the watchman of this place?"

The blows still came down, and the whip-wielder stood over me so that I could see them coming.

"The watchman is my loyal subject," the prince deigned to reply. "He has arranged this lovely place of meeting for

us. We expected Gomolani before long, but you arrived first."

"Where is Gomolani?" again demanded the prince.

"Is it true that they have found immense stores of pearls around your island?" I asked, in defiant response to his query. My arms shrank away from the blows of the dreadful whip, and thus under their bonds, my hands came to the edge of the board on which I was lying.

I felt the smooth surface under me, and the edge. It was a table, the desk used in this underground banana conservatory.

VI

"*Alao!*" cried the prince again. Again I heard many steps; and dark faced men surrounded me. They brought revolvers forward in their hands. Some were well-dressed. Some looked like laborers. One of them still wore his badge as watchman of the fruit establishment. It must have been easy for him to secure a job, because the Caucasian Polynesians are born fruiterers.

"Now listen!" said Kalokiu. "We have kidnaped you and brought you here, and you have been whipped like a hound. That should show that we fear no punishment from American law."

"If you don't you're a fool," responded my old self, quite in form.

"We find on you," said the prince, breathing heavily in his excitement, "two things. One is a coin of Gomolani—that is, of Otiusu!"

"He is my friend!" I interjected. "Proceed, plantation pirate; will you say more?"

"We find also on you a card—'Miss Elfie Abbott, Diversey Boulevard—'"

"Shut up, you whelp!" I shouted. "Don't use that name or I'll kill you."

"We have sent—for Miss—Elfie Abbott," said the prince, panting with excitement.

"What do you mean?" I shrieked. I was laughing no more.

"We know not all of your electrical devices," said the prince, struggling with rage and triumph. "But I had some teaching in a mission school. We have sent for her in a taxicab, with your

cards, your pocket pieces, your watch with her picture—"

I worked with all my muscles to wrench myself loose from the bonds and succeeded only in working my hand further out. It fell back, under the sneering eyes of the prince, and the savage eyes of his henchmen watching my struggles. My hand dropped down along the side of the desk, and felt the glassy, unobtrusive head of an electric button.

"Just for luck," I thought, and pressed it. No bell sounded. No lights were changed. I was conscious of wondering how my boat pilot had become king of a fabulous pearl island. Then I appealed to the prince.

"Don't dare attempt harm to an American girl," I cried. "We'll burn you at the stake."

"Liar," he exclaimed, with a touch of royal scorn. "We know in the South Seas that you look upon women as dogs. One of my men here said he thought you would talk if you knew your sweetheart's life was also in danger. I think he is silly to imagine it. But if she is here she will yield sooner to the whip and to torture than an iron-jawed sailor."

I cursed all the brass that had ever been compounded. Then with a sudden recollection I pressed the button again. In the course of the next few minutes I pressed it again. I knew what to do, or guessed what to do.

"I really don't want this woman harmed," I said, warily.

"The taxicab will be here shortly."

"I congratulate you on your knowledge of our electrical devices."

There was the faintest break in the cloud on Kalokiu's face.

"I think I am in the hands of men as clever as our great Edison," I went on. "I think I can tell you where Charles Gomolani is."

All semblance of royal calm left the prince's countenance. There was hesitation, trepidation, in his manner, and in his tones. He looked not a King, but a creeping assassin, as he whispered, "Where is he? Where is Gomolani?"

"Gomolani," I replied, "is now in Ottawa, Ontario."

The watchman interposed. "Fool! We know he is in Chicago."

"Is King Kalokiu's friend and informant to be called a fool before the king's face?" I demanded. Royally, Kalokiu turned upon the man and kicked him. I roared with the laughter of Jack ashore.

"Tell more," said Kalokiu to me. "Is it not possible he is in Chicago?"

I was listening. "It is possible," I replied. "In fact, it is very possible. But pardon me, your Majesty—I hear footsteps without! The taxicab must have come."

"To the door!" said Kalokiu in Manahitan to his companions. "I pray you," said I, "that you do not frighten this woman, if I deal rightly with you."

"She shall not be frightened," said Kalokiu.

"Then I pray you let me be unbound, and let the revolvers of your brave soldiers be laid aside, or she will swoon with fear," I said. "There are many men here to overpower us, and she a woman."

He nodded contemptuously. A loud knocking was heard on a door which opened from our cellar room to the street. Kalokiu gave quick orders, and the men laid their revolvers at one side, and lounged back in the darkness while the watchman cut my bonds. Then the watchman hurried to the door.

There was a louder knock at the entrance, and I heard the sound of many feet. "Come on in," I cried aloud. I tumbled from my stiff bondage, and yawned and stretched myself before the pile of revolvers. I noted one bull-dog such as I had used at sea.

VII

Then came the heavy, straining, crushing sound of powerful men hurling themselves on oaken door panels. The watchman still toiled hurriedly with the lock.

"Let us in here! Open up," roared a heavy, bellowing voice.

"It is a white man!" exclaimed Kalokiu, turning suddenly upon me. I held the bull-dog straight into his face. "Silence, or you are the pig for a cannibal feast." I hissed at him.

All could now hear the subdued roar .

of angry voices and the noise of stamping feet. The assault on the door was bearing it down. The watchman had leaped back in terror at the prince's cry. "It is a white man." For the watchman had his crime of betrayal to answer for in addition to the others.

With one, two—three heavy crashes, the door tumbled in, and into the gas-lit cellar charged a troop of Chicago police, revolvers gleaming and ready. As I glanced at them Kalokiu whirled around as if to spring on me, but I held the bulldog to his face again. The police with one sweep of steel barrels covered everybody with their revolvers. The troop of Oceanicans fell on their knees, weeping and cowering and imploring mercy.

I still held Kalokiu under fire and addressed the officers. "I called you! I pressed the call-button!"—I still watched the man. "I am Gerald James of the Interior Bank."

The snapping of handcuffs already was heard among the weeping barbarians, the watchman weeping loudest. I went on.

"I charge this scoundrel Kalokiu with kidnaping me, with breaking into and entering this place, and with conspiring to assassinate King Charles Gomolani of Manahita!"

Two officers stepped to the side of the prince and grasped his arms. He started to explain that he was a king, but he was double-handcuffed in a flash. "My rights are extra-territorial," he exclaimed.

"King Charles Gomolani," snapped the officer at his right, "has asked the police department to keep a special outlook for you. You and your gang have several times attempted his life. I'm Lieutenant Schauroth of this precinct, and I have my orders."

"Where is Gomolani?" asked Kalokiu.

"I think I may tell you now," said the lieutenant. "He is at the Hotel Acropolis."

"I have been at the same hotel all the time," cried Kalokiu. He gave me one last glance of fury. "And you knew this?" he cried.

"I knew it," I said. "Or at least, I guessed it."

VIII

Into the midst of the confusion now hurried the most confused man of all, the Italian-American proprietor of the fruit establishment. With many maledictions and exclamations he explained how he had employed the "Negro" watchman, and had come down because of the alarm bell, which roused his house as well as the police station. We had not time to tell him all at once; but he learned enough to excite him mightily. It was a story of royal conspiracy equal to the plots of mediaeval Italy.

"You want one more man," I said to Lieut. Schauroth. "He is coming in a taxicab."

I asked the proprietor for running water, and hastily washed from my face the blood from the whip-cuts. Then we stepped out. Already the handcuffed Polynesians, with Kalokiu first of all, were being loaded into wagons. I saw, far away, the glimmer of the taxicab's lamps.

"Kalokiu, old horse!" I yelled into the crowd of cowering islanders and wondering policemen. "You understand some electrical devices, but you never noticed those desk buttons by which the police are called in a hurry to large establishments. When you get out of jail, if you ever do, you should make a study of them."

There was no response from the silent wagons. The lieutenant and I ran out to meet the taxicab. A man rose from beside the chauffeur and jumped out, snugly into the lieutenant's arms. I opened the door, saw with new delight that Elfie had not ventured forth alone. The kindly face of her gray old father looked benignly but inquiringly upon me.

"I am sorry to have called you so late at night," was all I said to Elfie then. "They thought I was seriously hurt. Some desperate men have been caught here by the police. I can tell you all when we have a breathing spell. Back to Diversey Boulevard." I said to the chauffeur.

Quickly as possible we took Elfie out of the crowd of patrol autos and civilian spectators, and made our way through the darkness. I told the story

of the night to a girl who wept at my sufferings and cried with glee at my strategy and success. In her keen sense of my perils she never seemed to think of us not being betrothed lovers—she thought only of me. In telling it, I also thought of nothing but the one intense agony of the evening—my fear that she might be in peril from this savage adventurer. There were happy tears in her eyes when I bade her good-by at the door. Then I ordered the chauffeur to take me to the police station.

IX

I entered the doorway, and saw an odd scene: the whole line of Polynesian prisoners prostrate before the uniformed figure of one of the most superb and handsome men I ever beheld. He looked with calm, silent contempt upon them, and most of all upon the groveling, abject figure of Kalokiu, who was eating the very dirt of the floor before him. In a rich, dark Prussian uniform, my pilot of Manahita looked wholly the king, and looked royally superior to the man who had crossed 15,000 miles of sea and land for the purpose of assassinating him.

I looked at the king, and my eyes caught the door of the captain's private room. There stood no one but the gray-haired and always imposing Acker Jonson, president of the Bank of the Interior. But at that moment the captain spoke to King Charles. With a delightful smile Gomolani turned toward me, stepped from the group of Polynesians and fairly ran into my arms with a royal embrace.

"You are my brother and my friend," he exclaimed. "That Kalokiu has himself told me of your courage, and that you called me your brother and your friend, and that you knew where I stayed, and would not betray me."

The officers began to remove the Polynesians to their cells. The white-haired, redoubtable figure of Acker Jonson began to loom toward us as he marched across the floor.

"See, my brother," said Gomolani,

waving gracefully toward the approaching banker, who was smiling with the broadest geniality. "I do greatly appreciate your courage in my poor behalf."

"You saved our lives once, Gomolani—your Majesty," I added.

"But you make me the debtor now," he said. "While I owe all to you, there is only one poor way I can show my gratitude. Manahita has been found, this year, to be the richest of all pearl islands. I have come to America in the interests of my kingdom, for the development of those inexhaustible treasures. Some bank must be the fiscal representative and agent of my kingdom, and its officers may further represent us in our pearl industries. All the banks in America desire that task. I shall deal entirely with the Bank of the Interior, because it will benefit my brother, and my friend."

The officers stood at a little distance, so this private announcement was heard only by Mr. Jonson. And Mr. Jonson added, to me, in his rolling voice:

"Of course, you understand, Mr. James: I have assured His Majesty that you would prosper personally in the prosperity which this great business would bring to our bank. I can promise you, now that I have consulted most of the other big stockholders, that a part of your payment will be in the stock of the bank, with a substantial bonus. Your knowledge of the South Seas will make you more than ever invaluable to us, and I am sure that your new position and your prosperity will be in every way satisfactory to yourself, and to His Majesty. And, further,"—he hesitated a moment.

"Yes, Mr. Jonson?"

"You are to be married some day, perhaps?" he said vaguely.

"Oh, very soon," I said, or my vocal organs said it for me.

"I thought so," said Mr. Jonson. Of course he knew nothing of Elfie. "After to-night," he went on to comment, "you can well afford it."

At the wedding, Elfie will wear twenty-four Manahita pearls, the present of a king, who is my brother and my friend.



Further Adventures of a Diplomatic Free Lance

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

BETRAYED in a mysterious manner, the Diplomatic Free Lance finds himself in imminent peril of assassination by his vindictive enemies. His ward, Nan Tremaine, discovers the extraordinary fashion in which these deadly foes are obtaining their information; and at a wireless station on the Cornish coast, in one of the most tensely dramatic scenes imaginable, these enemies are eventually defeated.

No. III—A LEAK IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE

IT IS the exceptional case when a girl of fifteen finds herself in demand for house-parties, in England. Upon the Continent, it is equally rare. Under the European system, children inhabit two mysterious regions, successively—the nursery and the school-room. Beyond their boundaries, they appear upon special occasions—as a privilege to which their actual status does not entitle them. At social functions in the parental home, they are permitted to sit around in corners and watch the performances of the grown-ups—and they get a chance at the supper when the dining-room has pretty well thinned out. But they are seldom invited to other houses for anything but distinctively “children’s parties.” If the girl has been away at boarding-school, she is rather more in evidence—just as the boy, home from Eton or Harrow, is not altogether *de trop* in the drawing-room of an evening. But, as a rule, children don’t mix with grown-ups in general

society until they’ve reached a certain age—and, judging by subsequent results, the system has much to commend it.

With Nan Tremaine, however, no rules applied—nobody thought of applying them. From her seventh year, when her mother died, she had been the companion and chum of her father—a brilliant officer of the Indian Secret Service—and this naturally gave her a maturity beyond her age. At his death, she inherited five thousand a year, sterling—held in trust by her guardian, Lord Trevor of Dartmoor. And as Lord Trevor—one of the most popular and wealthy men in Europe—made his pretty ward as much of a companion as her father had done, several hostesses insured the presence of His Lordship at their homes by including the attractive child in their invitation.

It must not be inferred that Nan was forward or presuming, in consequence;

on the contrary, she was a particularly quiet, mind-her-own-business young person—a natural, healthy girl with those she liked—full of spontaneous fun and wit—an expert in most outdoor sports—a student who often surprised her elders by what she really knew. But among strangers, or in a roomful of grown-ups, she was a modest little individual who effaced herself as much as possible, yet who lost nothing of what happened to be said in her presence.

When accepting an invitation from the popular Mrs. Benham Llarnoch to spend a fortnight at her picturesque old Manse upon the cliffs near St. Just, in Cornwall, her guardian had cautioned her to do so with a reservation.

"Delightful place, Nan—magnificent sea view from the dinin'-room windows—sure to be interestin' people there, and all that, you know. And it's but a few miles from Lammerford's place, south of Land's End. But one never can tell what may turn up at a moment's notice—I dip into all sorts of things a bit. You'd best accept for the week-end, an' say we'll stay longer if nothin' calls me away—might explain that my solicitors are makin' some business appointm'ts for me, but that it's possible I may not be called upon for several days. Of course, you know, Mrs. 'Ben' won't really believe it—she'll think we're keen upon seein' who the other people are before committin' ourselves to a stay of any length. But if she happens to awsk one or two of 'em about it, I fawncy they'll back our explanation. It's deuced odd, Nan—how things come about. I frequ'ntly accept invitations like this with the idea that I'll just loaf quietly an' forget that matters are happenin' all the time which mustn't be permitted to happen—if one can forestall 'em. And then—when I'm quite lazy an' comfy, you know—I'm likely to find somethin' goin' on right under my nose, as one might say—eh, what?"

"Why, Guardy—that doesn't appear odd to me. You've been training yourself to close observation for years; and little things which might seem meaningless to anyone else, often have an importance which you never miss. You

know the complicated web of European politics as few other men know it. What seems to me strangest of all is your ability to give people such a totally different impression. Outside of the very few who know you as you really are, I don't believe a single person ever imagines you have the slightest interest in politics or diplomacy. With poor Daddy, it was different: *He was known* to be in the Secret Service—he couldn't pretend to be sleepy and bored when people talked of State affairs in his presence, as you do. In disguise, he was never suspected, but at home or at his office we knew that he was constantly watched. In your case it would seem absurd to watch you; everything you do is so open, so apparently unconscious. I can't understand just how you manage it, Guardy. You spend an hour or two at some one's reception—and come away with a hint which you act upon. You hit the mark every time, as far as I can see, but—where do you get the hint? Out of two hundred people in a house, one man will have in his pocket a paper which, in your hands, is a key to State secrets. When the man gets home the paper is still in his possession—but in some mysterious way you have managed to learn its contents. Take that letter you made me return to Baron Mennikoff, a while ago. The seal was unbroken—he knew it hadn't been tampered with—yet in some way you guessed what it *might* be and sent me in to supper with him, knowing he was likely to speak in Russian to his friends about the letter, and that I would probably overhear what they said. Well—it all happened just that way—and you saved the Austrian Premier. But how did you figure it out? That's what *I* want to know!"

"Umph! The joke of it is, you *do* know, but you don't realize it because English life seems different to you from Indian customs. Suppose you were out for a morning stroll through the bazaars in Peshawar, and saw a Pathan in the clothes of a syce, with the caste-marks of a Rajput—pricing a box of manufactured cigarets? You'd know he was an Afghan in disguise the moment you laid eyes on him, wouldn't you? Exactly! And you'd know that

when a Pathan buys ready-made cigarettes, he wants them for some other purpose than smoking? Precisely! About that time, it might occur to you that one of the Rajahs in the neighborhood had purchased three new motor-cars—when he'd been deuced hard up, the previous month. You might even remember seeing him toss a couple of silver rubles into the begging-bowl of a fakir, as he passed—and you'd know that rubles are coined in Russia. Piecing this and that together, you'd naturally conclude that your Rajah was receiving considerable Russian money for some purpose not entirely satisfactory to the Indian Government—and that very likely your Afghan syce was the go-between—that, eventually, those cigarettes he purchased would each contain a message upon a little square of tissue-paper concealed in the tobacco nearest the cork tip. Well, Nan—the Game in Europe is much the same old Game as in the Punjab—only we lack something of the Oriental finesse, here."

"Guardy—you're going to let me play the Game, just a little—some time—aren't you?"

"Better not, Nan—better keep out of it. Human lives are merely pawns, you know—never to be considered when a question of national diplomacy is at stake. Your good father was feared and respected from Kabul to Singapore; dozens of Rajahs had eaten his salt; but he scored against Russian influence beyond the Khaibar once too often—and—he was 'eliminated,' you know. I learned, yesterday, what happened to the men who killed him. Rajah Bhaleep Sing's Rissaldar caught them fifteen miles out of Kabul, and brought them back to him. He ordered them placed, upright, in three large casks, poured liquid plaster around them, up to the level of their chins—and sat down with his narghileh to watch the result."

"Ugh-h-h! *Guardy!* That was horrible! But I don't care! They killed poor Daddy! They deserved it!"

"They certainly did, Nan—though European civilization would call us brutal for saying it. But—aside from the justice of it, that sort of thing isn't

what I'd care to have you see. And *seeing* as bad or worse than that is merely incidental to the game you want to play so much. It's a man's game. The women in it take men's chances, with their eyes open—but the consequences are worse for them if they're caught at it."

"But—if you never expect me to play the Game, Guardy—why are you so particular about my being a crack shot? Why do you so patiently fence with me, every chance you get, when we're alone? Abdool says no one can touch you with the foils."

"Because, Nan, I'm afraid I'll not be able to keep you out of it. If there's a chance of your meddling in such matters, you know, I must see that you're as well equipped as possible—that you play with judgment instead of rashness. If our ord'n'ry acquaintances knew about it, they might awsk why I keep you diggin' away at Wireless—in the Morse, Continental and *Telefunken* codes—whenever we're likely to be unobserved? Why—when you already speak five languages fluently—I should wish you to pick up four more? Why I wish you to learn mechanical drawing in addition to your free-hand work—or why I'm teachin' you tricks of horsemanship that only circus people are supposed to know? Your Aunt 'Vi'—Lady Kenderby—is a deuced bright woman, Nan. She's scored rather cleverly, once or twice, in Diplomatic affairs, but she takes far too many chawnces, and some day she'll come an awful cropper, you know. I've warned her as far as I can without exposin' my own hand, but she'll not listen to me. Well—have the maids get together what you'll need for a couple of weeks, an' we'll run down to Cornwall by the morning train. I fawncy Mrs. 'Ben' keeps up a decent enough stable—there'll be no occasion for takin' our own horses. Abdool and your *ayah* will be all we'll need with us, and they'll not get too chummy with the other servants down there."

Privately, Mrs. Benham-Llarnoch congratulated herself upon numbering among her guests so notable a lion as Lord Trevor. It was still an open question whether his Peerage had been con-

ferred for valuable contributions to the science of aviation, or because of his Continental popularity. Eccentric though he was known to be, and full of rather pronounced mannerisms, he was a delightful companion, a charming *raconteur* and a thoroughbred in every essential. It was understood that he recognized no rank but that of gentleman—and that to him, Kings and Emperors were but other members of his own class—which perhaps explained, in a measure, why they held him in such esteem.

Upon the morning after their arrival, he and his pretty ward took an early ride along the cliffs, before other guests had thought of getting up—returning as the first stragglers came down to breakfast. This meal, at an English country-house, is frequently a movable feast. The personal habits of guests differ so greatly—there is so wide a margin of indifference in the hours at which they may have retired the previous night—that an established meal-hour is difficult to maintain. Luncheon, also, is irregular, depending upon the return of those who have been out for the morning. At the seven-o'clock dinner, one should be punctual—there is seldom an excuse to be urged for tardiness or non-appearance—but in the morning, there may be one person or six at the breakfast table at any time between six and eleven, and there is always something upon the sideboard in heated chafers from which one may help himself if he feels "peckish."

There were three in the big, low-ceiled dining-room as His Lordship rode by the windows with Nan—and, while remarking upon the perfect horsemanship of the pair, one of them noticed the covered stirrups of the saddles which Trevor had evidently brought down with him. This started a discussion which lasted through the grape-fruit and kidneys—His Lordship condemning, with excellent reasons, the iron stirrup so commonly used with the flat, English saddle. While they were arguing, his eye fell carelessly upon a pile of letters from the early post, at the side of Mrs. "Ben's" plate. Sticking out from under them was a newspaper in German type which seemed familiar

to him, even in its wrapper. Betraying interest in another person's correspondence was a sort of ill-breeding utterly foreign to him; he didn't glance at the paper again; but, after finishing his breakfast, he sat down to enjoy a cigar in the window-seat, keeping up a fragmentary chat with those still at the table. Before his cigar was half finished, Mrs. "Ben" had worked down through her post to the paper.

Now, had Lord Trevor been called upon to explain his interest in that particular journal—mailed to his hostess—he would have found it difficult. For one thing, perhaps, he was surprised at the inference that she understood the language—Mrs. Benham Llarnoch having been the second daughter of a country gentleman who possessed little cultivation. Benham-Llarnoch himself had been a city man who made a fortune by a lucky deal in "rubbers" and died on a voyage to South America, two years before; and his widow had subsequently risen to social prominence through her gift of saying witty things and her possession of admirable tact. Of French, she professed to have but the merest smattering and if she understood any other language, it was something her associates had never suspected. Still His Lordship would have thought this a trivial reason for his interest in her foreign newspaper. Perhaps its being German excited some little nerve of curiosity at the back of his brain—Nan afterward called it that sixth sense which made her Guardian the marvel he was in Diplomatic affairs. As he sat there with his cigar, in the window-seat, he was conscious of a desire to see that newspaper, but he couldn't account for that desire. He just had it, that was all; and in the ordinary course of events, he might not have been able to gratify it. But, in the way such things do happen when the Fates take a hand, Mrs. "Ben" gave him an opening without guessing his interest. Coming to a marked paragraph upon one of the pages, she read it aloud as a matter of possible interest to her guests.

"Freddy Pointdexter seems to have done rather well for himself. Here's a notice of his marriage in Berlin to the Countess von Ehrlengburg. I've never

met the bride, but there was a picture of her in the *Ladies Realm*, with a description of her fortune and jewels. Rather nice, that—for a boy in the 'Guards.' Do you happen to know either of them, Lord Trevor?"

"Why—let me consider a bit. That'll be Leftenant Freddy—one of the Yorkshire family. I fawncy we meet quite frequently at the Reform Club, don't you know. The Countess is a deuced handsome woman, as I recall her. Is that the weekly *Berliner Zeitung* you have there, Mrs. 'Ben?' Fawncy! Used to practice up on that, you know, when I was studyin' German—got so I knew where to find most anything, just by the look of the type." Lord Trevor's attempts at mastering foreign languages were a standing joke throughout Europe.

"Why, then it must seem like an old friend to you—or a nightmare, depending upon how much difficulty you had with the language. Wouldn't you like to glance through it, again?"

"Rawther—Awfter you've quite finished with it."

"Oh, take it now. My German is so limited that I find translating very tiresome. Besides, I fancy there's nothing else I care to see in this copy. Can't imagine who sent it—that's not Freddy's writing upon the wrapper."

"Thanks. I'll just glance through it while I'm finishin' my cigar, an' then return it to you."

Probably every school-boy has carried on, at some time or other, a correspondence with his chums in a cipher of their own contriving; and it is equally certain that lovers, from the time printing was invented, have worked out systems of conveying hidden messages through the medium of cold type. But the "paragraph system" must have originated in the Diplomatic Corps—because of a simplicity which makes it more blind than it really seems to the average person. A thoroughly innocuous paragraph is marked—generally a marriage notice or some personal item which might be of interest to anyone receiving it. To the uninitiated, there is no other clue to the message actually sent—but one familiar with the system and knowing the methods of the sender,

will count three or four columns to the right or left of the marked paragraph, measure an equal distance from the top of the column, and find one of two things. Either the real paragraph which the sender desires him to read—or a series of tiny dots, each under a separate printed letter, and the whole forming a message when the letters are divided into words. Some of the dots may be a couple of lines apart—when the desired letter doesn't occur at a shorter interval in the printed text—and all of them are so inconspicuous that the average reader would fail to notice them. Sometimes, as an extra precaution, the dots or the real paragraphs are placed in an exactly corresponding position upon a different page. And if the system is blind in one's own language, it is doubly so in a foreign one where printed dots occur as frequently with the letters as in German.

Lord Trevor, however, had made an exhaustive study of ciphers of every description—so thorough, in fact, that he could translate a code he'd never seen before if given time enough to work it out, the same basic principle underlying all codes of a particular class. Handing the paper to him, Mrs. 'Ben' proceeded to open the rest of her letters—chatting with others at the table as if the incident had passed from her mind. But, from the corner of her eye, she was noting the way in which His Lordship glanced over the pages—though he was not aware of the espionage. His lips moved silently, as if he were slowly repeating the German words to himself—as one does who hasn't thoroughly mastered a language and is not sure of his translation. It had been said of him that he would have made an enviable reputation upon the stage. Skipping from page to page with the familiarity of one who knows where certain items are usually printed, he satisfied himself that no "dot" system had been used—and began reading paragraphs in a corresponding position to the marked one. In a moment or so, he found what he was looking for, but the pages had been turned back and forth so many times that Mrs. 'Ben' had no idea which of them he was reading. In fact, being quite satisfied that he'd no ulterior mo-

tive in looking at the paper, she had forgotten it. Glancing through the paragraph, he re-read it more slowly—and had he not been the perfectly controlled machine he was, an exclamation might have betrayed him. The item was in a regular department of the paper, entitled—"Echoes from the Wilhelmstrasse"—and read:

It is now admitted the Auswartiges Amt is in possession of full details concerning the reported concessions in Turkey. They were granted to an English Viscount for supposedly personal reasons, and it was considered probable that unless he formed operating companies, with heavy backing, there might be nothing done with them for some years. It has been learned, however, through private channels known to the Imperial Government, that the Viscount—having little business ability or taste for commercial affairs, has sold the concessions to a syndicate which masks the British Government, and that operations—protected by force of arms if necessary—will be commenced whenever the British Cabinet deems it advisable. Upon certain other matters, the Auswartiges Amt is equally well informed through the same channels—the Herr Chancellor having received positive assurance that one item in the Russian negotiations was nullified by the action of an unknown agent of the British Foreign Office. The Herr Chancellor expects to learn this man's identity within a few days, and is to be congratulated upon the efficiency of our Secret Service.

Lord Trevor methodically turned the pages right-side-out again—smothered a yawn behind his hand—and removed his monocle long enough to polish it. After which, he stepped across the room and laid the paper by Mrs. "Ben's" plate.

"Er—thanks, Mrs. 'Ben.' Awf'ly int'restin', don't you know, to glawnce over something that used to be 'lessons' when you're not obliged to study 'em any more—what? Same old paper, by Jove! Sportin' news in the same place, club items just where they used to be an' the commercial stuff all on one page, so one may skip it without botherin'. So much better than the demmed Radical sheets that are always changin' about so one never knows where to find anything in 'em—what? Well—what's on hand, this mornin'? If we're not wanted for anything in partic'lar, I believe I'll do a bit of a tramp along the

cliffs with Nan—she wants to make a sketch or two of the rocks."

As nobody had energy enough to make a general proposition, the people scattered aimlessly to spend what remained of the morning in writing letters, or in such amusement as presented itself—it being understood there would be golf or motoring to Penzance in the afternoon, with bridge after dinner. Nan had heard nothing of the sketching arrangement until her guardian mentioned it, but she wouldn't have been her father's daughter had she given any evidence of this. Merely waiting until Mrs. 'Ben' smilingly nodded, she ran upstairs for sketch-book and crayons, which Lord Trevor afterward stuffed in his pockets.

"Good an excuse as any, Nan. I thought we might tramp over an' make the operator's acquaintance in that wireless station we noticed on our ride this morning. Didn't care to say anything about your studyin' it, you know." The girl looked up at him with a bright, searching glance.

"Guardy—is there anything doing, as the Americans say?"

"Oh—one can never tell as to that, you know. We may do nothin' but nap an' amuse ourselves down here and, again, some triflin' thing may prove interestin'—what? It just occurred to me, you know, that if this operator happens to be approachable, you might get chummy with him—so you could run over informally an' get him to give you a lesson or two, when there was nothin' much goin' on at the house. I fawncy you'd best not let the people see you, though, if it can be avoided."

His Lordship made friends easily—which is putting it mildly, as people usually went to considerable trouble merely because of the genially attractive manner in which he approached them. It was against the rules of the Company to entertain visitors in the operating-room of the Wireless Station, but Lord Trevor's first remark proved him a fellow electrician, and his card produced that added respect which is accorded the Peerage in England. The operator glanced at it a second time, as if he were trying to remember something.

"Your Ludship's name appears quite familiar to me—I've probably read of you in the papers, I suppose."

"Pawssibly—though I fawncey you may have seen it elsewhere. If I'm not mistaken, you'll find it upon that list of your comp'ny's stations—tacked upon the wall yonder. I'm one of the Directors, I believe."

"Faith—if that's the case, Your Ludship may do as you please, here, whenever you like to call! And I'll wager you're an operator yourself, Sir—your hands rather have the appearance of it."

Nan made friends upon her own appearance and manner and the suggestion of her coming over to receive an occasional lesson met with the young fellow's unqualified approval. To instruct a deuced pretty girl was a pleasant enough task in itself—but when she happened to be the ward of a Company Director, why, there might be a prospect of advancement in it! You never could tell. All of which ranked among the considerations which had induced Lord Trevor to invest fifty thousand pounds in the stock of the Company. He believed that Wireless had a big future, of course—and he was enough of an electrician to foresee the ultimate development of the invention. He'd received two dividends of eight per cent on his stock—which was encouraging—but his main object had been the privileges which a Director of any company exercises in Europe. If they failed to prove advantageous when he was depending upon them—why—the stock was already ten points above what he paid for it and could be readily sold. It may be stated, in this connection, that his Directorship in this particular Company gave him a highly plausible excuse for installing upon his country estate—Trevor Hall, South Devon—a thoroughly equipped station with a radius of three thousand miles, though few people in the neighborhood were aware of its existence. The estate was nearly three miles across, and that part of it in which the aërials had been erected was thickly wooded—the wires being laid underground to a soundproof room in the Hall itself. Even the telephonic communication differed from that of the ordinary manor-house, being conducted

by submarine cables to an isolated point, twenty miles up the coast, and thence by private wire into London. In the opposite direction, a cable terminated in the mooring buoy of his yacht, in Salcombe harbor.

Next morning, His Lordship received a telegram calling him up to London, but he left Nan with their hostess, and promised to return within a day or two, if possible. Arriving in Town, however, he seemed to have forgotten all about his solicitors, for he drove straight to his apartments in Grosvenor Place where Sabub Ali, his other Pathan attendant, preceded him and arranged for a dinner-party of three. When the guests arrived, they proved to be Sir Edward Wray—Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—and Mr. Lammerford, ex-Dean of the King's Messengers. During the meal, the conversation fell upon general topics, but when the cigars were lighted, Trevor said:

"I had a queer premonition that you might want to see me about something or other, Wray—and came up from Cornwall just on the strength of it. Fawncied 'twould do no harm to have a chat together, at all events—we've not seen much of each other for the lawst month or two." Sir Edward thoughtfully fingered the stem of his wine-glass as he glanced across the table.

"What put it into your head that I might wish to confer with you, Trevor? Do you know, I think you're the strangest combination in the way of a human being I ever ran across—your intuitions are a bit uncanny, at times, and for a shining example of pure luck, you beat any horse-shoe ever dropped upon the road. I shouldn't have said that I really had a definite reason for wanting to see you, just now—until you made the suggestion. I've been puzzled over a certain incident—but I dare say I should have considered it of little importance had not your dinner invitation suggested it again."

"What's the incident, Wray? Let's have it."

"Why—as you know, the German railways through Anatolia and down the Tigris valley to Bassorah are likely to be completed in two years. And our steamship companies have been given to

understand that propositions for extended services from Bassorah in connection with them would receive favorable consideration. After some conference with our ship-owners, we made a tentative suggestion that the British India Steam Navigation Company inaugurate a through service from Bassorah to Hong Kong and Kiau Chau by way of Bombay, Colombo and Singapore—taking the German-Turkish Mails for the East, as they came down by rail, upon the understanding that the *Deutsche Ost-Afrika Linie* should handle the Cape and East Africa traffic from those railways exclusively. The service was to be performed by twin-screw express steamers, similar to the new P. & O. boats—and we thought it a fair proposition for the Germans, because none of their Companies have boats available for such a service that are good for more than fifteen knots. In fact, we anticipated harmonious agreement. But, two days ago, it was announced in Hamburg that orders had been placed with the Stettiner-Vulcan Works for six twenty-knot boats to inaugurate this identical service upon completion of the railways—sailing under the Hamburg-American flag. Now—considering the friendly way our propositions had been received, and the previously favorable attitude, over there, we've been wondering in Downing Street whether they were bluffing us all along, or whether something occurred, recently, to change their minds." Lammerford had been listening, intently. As he grasped the force of Sir Edward's explanation, a more serious expression crept over his face.

"Gad, Wray—they weren't bluffing up to last week! I happen to know they considered the proposition a good one—they didn't want to spend upwards of twenty million marks upon a fast Oriental service until it had been proved a financial success. *Something happened to change their minds!*—And it's our business to find out what it was, with the least possible delay! Have you heard anything, Trevor?"

"Well—I read a paragraph in the *Berliner Zeitung*, yesterday morning, which has some bearing upon the question. Their Foreign Office in the Wil-

helmstrasse has obtained definite information that my Turkish concessions were sold to a Syndicate that had our Governm't back of it, and that we meant to develop and protect them with all the force necessary. Furthermore, they knew it was some one from Downing Street who rescued the Austrian Premier from that yacht in the Channel—and the *Zeitung* states they expect to have the man's name inside of a week."

"Oh the devil! If by any mischance they happen to get it, George, the safest place for you is on your new bi-plane—about two miles up!"

"Gad, Trevor—if they discover *all* you've done in the last six years, I'd not care to insure you even *there!*"

"We-e-l-l—that's a prospect I've had before me, constantly and I'm not dead yet, by a demmed sight. The point is, Wray—*there's a leak somewhere in the Foreign Office*. If they merely get *me*, I shall undoubtedly regret it and some of you, I dare say, will occasionally miss 'the touch of a vanished hand,' as we do that poor Guy Tremaine—but one life is, after all, but a small loss to a nation, one by no means irreparable. The serious feature of this, however, is that my case is but the small end of it. Had anyone guaranteed to prevent this information getting into Germany's possession for a hundred thousand pounds, we shouldn't have hesitated long in signing the check. Of course, they can't get the concessions away from us—but they'll do their damndest, now, to force others for themselves which are likely to give them a big advantage. As Lammy says, we can't stop this leak any too quickly. Suppose we get down to business."

"My word, Trevor—you're quite right! But—hang me if I know where to begin!"

"Begin by elimination—that'll tell us *something!* For example: until four weeks ago, none but yourself in Downing Street, knew of my obtaining those concessions—knew I transferred them to the Syndicate. That cuts out everyone not in close touch with the Foreign Office since then. You know where your people are—every hour or so. Now, how many of them could have known these facts within the past month?"

"Not over eight, at the outside and.

I'd answer with my life for every one of them."

"Very good! We'll assume that you can answer for them under ord'n'ry circumstances. Which brings us to considerin' exceptional conditions. How many of 'em are drinkin' men?"

"Not one that you'd call a 'drinking man.' Probably all of them take a glass of wine with their dinner just as we do. But one drink a day wouldn't incapacitate anybody."

"One drink a year might be *drugged*. Still, if they're habitually temperate men, they wouldn't drink with anyone they weren't sure of. How about them physically? Are any in poor health? Run down? Overworked? Losing too much sleep?"

"Why—no more than anyone, I should say. Wait a bit—young Desmond, who has charge of the official files, had quite a severe touch of grippe and hasn't regained his strength. He seemed to be thoroughly played out every day, after getting through with his work—I sent him away 'on leave,' two weeks ago."

"Desmond? I wonder why that name's a bit familiar to me just now? Do I know the chap?"

"Possibly not. You seldom go into the file-rooms, you know. He may have been out when you *were* there."

"Very likely. Well—how about the others? Any of 'em been laid up? Do any of 'em gamble? Have you a suspicion that any may be in need of tin?"

"No—no—I'm quite positive. All our people serve for years in the Consular and Diplomatic services before 'ever they come to Downing Street, you know; they've been tested in every conceivable way, and I think they're sufficiently well paid. You may judge of that by your own experience with us, Trevor. Where did you see that paragraph in the *Berliner Zeitung*?"

"House where I was stayin'—down in Cornwall. Sent to my hostess, with Lieutenant Poindexter's weddin' notice marked. I was lookin' through the paper an' stumbled upon the paragraph by accident—well, anyhow, it wasn't penciled."

"Which means you *were* looking for something. Why, Trevor—why?"

"Oh—general principles, I suppose."

"Er—have you reason to suppose the lady might have been interested in that political item?"

"None whatever. She knows Freddy Poindexter quite well—I believe he was rawther *épris* there, a year ago. Perfectly natural for some mutual friend to send her that weddin' notice, as far as I can see."

"Oh, quite so—there's no ground for suspicion in that. By the way, do you mind telling us who the lady is?"

"Not in the least—the society gazettes will tell you, this week, that Nan and I are stayin' the fortnit with Mrs. Benham-Llarnoch, near St. Just."

"Deuced handsome woman, that—and clever, too. Charming hostess—I've been down there myself. You must know her, Lammerford; your place is quite near, isn't it?"

"Within eight miles. I've known of her for several years. She dabbles in stocks quite a bit, and I understand she came beastly cropper in 'rubbers,' a year ago. Her husband made his fortune in them, but he knew when to stop. Of course, I've no idea how much she lost, but my informant thought she was badly hipped. Fawncy he must have been mistaken, though—she's keeping up her place rawther better than usual, this year, and has bought a couple of expensive motors. However—all this is wide of the point. Where are we at upon the question of leakage? Any further ideas, Trevor?"

"Pawssibly. Er—what sort of a look-in' chap is Desmond?"

"Tall—slight—medium complexion—rather anæmic just now, I fancy. Brown mustache, good eyes, a bit sleepy looking when he's below par." A brief flash crossed Lord Trevor's face, as if he'd suddenly remembered something.

"Hmph! I fawncy I'm beginnin' to see a bit of light. May be nothin' in it, of course—but you let me handle this for a day or two, Wray, an' I'll see if I cawn't get to the bottom of it. The matter's too serious to drop; we'd best keep at it to the exclusion of other affairs for the present. I say, Lammy—Can you run down to my place in Devon with me, by the night train? May need you before I'm through."

"Rawther! If this isn't stopped at once, we shall be in beastly hot water, presently!"

Next morning, after a late breakfast at Trevor Hall, the Viscount and his friend ascended to the upper floor, where an operating-room had been constructed at the rear of the original Norman tower, with solid, three-foot walls, through which it was impossible for the crash of the wireless spark to penetrate—ventilation being secured by means of a contrivance similar to the muffler of an automobile. Turning on the lights, Lord Trevor handed Lammerford a "head-frame" and, adjusting a duplicate one over his own ears, lighted a long cigar. They were prepared to wait, if necessary, for an indefinite time—with the patience of men who know that patience scores in the long run. Lammerford had no idea what His Lordship expected to hear, or from what direction it was likely to come, but knew he would probably recognize anything of importance when the aërials caught it. After something over an hour, there came a word in Hindustani which made him listen more intently and look at Lord Trevor in considerable surprise, as it was persistently repeated:

"*Cho-or!—Cho-or!—Cho-or!*" (Literally, "Thief!—Thief!—Thief!")

It was the cry that, heard in a caravanserai at night, rouses every man with his weapons in hand and the hunt-lust in his blood. Spelled out in the Continental Code, upon the diaphragms at his ears, it had a wierd and startling effect which set Lammerford's nerves on edge. So much so, that he almost sprang from his chair when Trevor's hand descended upon the key, and a two-inch spark crashed out a reply which almost deafened him:

"*Salam, Shazadee!—Juldee karo!*" The message followed rather slowly, in the same language, as if the sender were an amateur and wished to be sure of each letter—which made it easier for Lammerford, whose Hindustani was not extensive.

"H. B. gone to coast-guard station—left me to keep house. Have examined equipment. Wires from aërials tapped under station roof—not apparent, be-

low. Have cut taps. Trouble for operator likely when cuts discovered. Protect him. 'B.' not aware of taps." Trevor paused but long enough to answer:

"Coming by motor—look out for yourself!" Then, flinging the "head-frame" upon the table, he said:

"A chance shot, Lammy—but it scored! By gad, it *scored!* I've been kicking myself for a fool ever since Tuesday morning—to even *think* there might be anything wrong, down there! But just on the bare possibility, I took Nan over and made her chummy with the operator, fawncyin' if anything were sent from that quarter it would be over the wireless—and Nan's right on deck, as you heard! Come on, man! We've an eighty-mile ride before us in a sixty horse power. Two hours should do it, if we're not arrested—and I fawncy we can avoid that. Unless I'm quite mistaken, there'll be nothin' interestin' before night, so we'll have time to make arrangements for blockin' it. Let's see, now—barrin' some accomplice, masqueradin' as a servant in the house, I fawncy there'll be no more than two of them to deal with, at the outside—an' the fewer there are to know the facts, the better. With you and Abdool, I should be able to handle the affair without further assistance—what? Do you know, I'll wager Pfaff's at the bottom of this! If he should happen to be near one of the wireless stations in Holland, just now, I'd be certain of it! Remember to find out, will you?"

When her guardian left her at Mrs. Benham-Llarnoch's, Nan experienced a sense of nervous apprehension. Intuition told her she had been left behind with some definite object in view—but what it might be she couldn't imagine. The incident of the German paper, that first morning, had escaped her attention, just as it had failed to impress anyone else—so there was nothing to direct suspicion against her hostess. Nan rather liked Mrs. "Ben"—she was so bright, clever, handsome. The idea of watching *her* never entered the girl's mind—but she thought over each of the others in turn. Pat Desmond—the good-looking young fellow who fenced so well and—almost—beat her at chess? Impossible!

Instinct assured her he was a gentleman in every sense of the word. Such a pity he'd been so ill! He seemed to be gaining strength, but still had fits of drowsiness after any unusual exertion. Sir John, or Lady Bassett? Hardly. They had been landed gentry a thousand years. The Ffoliott girls or Captain Lowther or Jimmy Carruthers—who *might* be a decent horseman if he'd only lengthen his stirrups? No—not one of them. The servants? Abdool had assured her, with fine contempt, of their harmlessness. What then? The "Wireless" station? Ah, Guardy had been at some pains to place her upon a visiting footing with the operator; it might be something connected with the station—that was it, of course!

It has been stated and emphasized that Nan was a mind-her-own-business young person. When *asked* to play tennis, or ride, or fence, or golf, she did so with an interest which made her very good company, but she was never in evidence *waiting* to be asked, and during the mornings she generally absented herself with the excuse that she was still in the school-room and had a certain amount of studying to get through each day. Sometimes, it was sketching, sometimes, text-books, but she disappeared for an hour or two after breakfast, with Abdool, and her hostess felt that she was entirely safe in his charge. One had but to look at the dignified Afghan to know that he would knife anyone who dared to lay a finger upon his "*Chota Ranee*."

During her second visit, Nan betrayed so much intelligence concerning things electrical that Henry Barney, the operator, found she actually remembered some of the letters when they didn't come too rapidly. Next day, Barney happened to run out of tobacco—and he worked at a disadvantage without a pipe in his mouth. St. Just was an hour from his station, on foot; he valued his berth too much to leave it so long during working-hours; but the Coast Guard station could be reached along the cliffs in ten minutes. So he asked Nan if she would keep the "head-frame" over her ears until he returned, and try to remember what calls she heard—an opportunity which suited her

to a dot, though she expressed some doubts as to her receiving ability.

Barney was hardly out of sight, when she was examining the wires leading down from the aërials, at the point where they entered the station. The operating-room and Barney's sleeping-quarters were ceiled and plastered—a glance at the sloping roof showed her there must be an open space or attic between ceiling and roof. In the little entry-hall she found a trap-door, overhead, through which she scrambled with Abdool's assistance, having provided herself with a small electric torch. In a moment, she had crawled over to where the wires came through the sheathing—and found to her amazement, that a duplicate circuit had been spliced onto them—wires that led down the wall, between the lath and plaster. Having been taught by her guardian to make every connection in a wireless outfit—and even how to "build up" a coil!—she knew these additional wires must enable some other outfit to avail itself of the company's aërials without erecting a "grid" of its own. And, on the reasonable supposition that they had no legitimate business there, she cut them with a pair of nippers—splicing the ends together and "grounding" them to "short-circuit" their current. Barney had told her of his taking the station, first, as substitute for the former operator, who had been seized with a mysterious form of poisoning which nearly finished him, and closed the station for three days—during which time, Nan thought some unknown person must have tapped the wires. Her excursion into the loft took but a scant ten minutes, and she was at the operating-table again, with her skirt brushed and hands washed, in plenty of time to send the message Lord Trevor had received, eighty odd miles to the east of her, before Barney returned. After this she remained with him another half-hour, while Abdool hunted around at the back of the station until he found the "tap-wires" and traced them under the heather to the cliff-brow—where a partially obliterated furrow indicated the presence of a cable under the soil. When they started upon their return to Mrs. "Ben," he showed her the furrow.

—and they succeeded in tracing it for nearly a mile.

In the afternoon Mrs. "Ben" took Pat Desmond for a stroll along the cliffs—as she had done every day, with the presumable object of building him up with a little wholesome exercise in the open air. It seemed odd to Nan that he usually appeared so greatly exhausted when they returned—more so than would have seemed possible from a short walk. But as he was quite evidently gaining a little each day, she thought the walks must be good for him after all.

As it happened, she had taken a book and gone off with Abdool to a cleft in the rocks by which a person might scramble down to a safe enough ledge under the jutting brow of the cliff, which completely hid it from the view of anyone overhead. And it was something more than accident—something that Lammerford called "the blind Trevor luck"—which induced Mrs. "Ben" to select that spot of all others for a tête-à-tête with Pat Desmond. Apparently, it was impossible for anyone to approach them from any direction without being seen—over the brink, it was three hundred feet sheer to where the surf boomed upon the rocks below, and the cleft leading down to the ledge was hidden in bay-bushes, fifty feet away. When their voices came down to her so distinctly, Nan started in disgust to get away from her ledge—eaves-dropping being taboo in her personal code—but a touch from Abdool, and the warning finger against his lips, restrained her. The conversation above became more confidential.

"D'ye know—you're awfully good to me, Dora. Why ye waste so much av your blissid time upon a wreck of a man like me, I dunno, I dunno."

"Seems to be doing you good, Patsy—you've more color in your cheeks, and you've gained two pounds since you came."

"Faith, I have, that—can't understand why I'm so bastely knocked up whiniver we come in from a walk. Hould a bit; I have it! It's because ye set the sowl ave me on fire with the prettiness av ye, an' give me no more'n the layin' av me head on your showlder

whin I'm sheer droppin' from wakeniss. It's the swate lips ave ye I'll be kissin' whin I've the stren'th to do it—mind, now."

"Well? And what if I let you—some time? What do you s'pose would happen, then?"

"Och, murther! It's crazy I'd be, I'm thinkin'!"

"Patsy—I like you a lot, and I'm independent enough to do as I please without caring what people say. But once in a while, you act in a way that hurts me—makes me feel as if I'd best have no more to do with you."

"For the love av Hivin, Acushla—what d'ye mane by that! Tell me, now—how did I iver hurt ye?"

"Oh, well—it's difficult to make it sound reasonable—but—it *did* hurt, all the same. I asked you a civil question the other morning about what you thought the Government would do in the Persian affair—asked you, because I've been in Teheran, and thought you Foreign Office men would be likely to know—and you changed the subject in a horribly rude manner. You—you squelched me as if I were scarcely out of the nursery and had been impertinent. And—really, you know, I'm not used to that sort of thing. When I ask a civil question, I generally get a civil answer."

"But—but—I say now, Dora—can ye not see that we of the Sarvice talk to no one of Government affairs—that it touches our personal honor to ask it av us? God knows—if ye were my wife, that I'd hould against the wurruld—I'd not spake with ye upon such matthers! Besides—'twas jokin' I thought ye were. Ye've no look av a camel-rider about ye."

"'Camel-rider?' *Me?* Fancy!"

"Now there ye are, d'ye see. One reaches Teheran by camel, ye know. Sure 'twas jokin' ye were all the time!"

"Oh, well—I suppose I was." (A shiver went through her at the blunder she'd made) "But I don't like the implication that I'm a gossip or a tattler who'd go about repeating what anyone told me in confidence—however—Come now, Patsy—you mustn't get worked up over it. Excitement isn't good for you. Lean against my shoulder, if you

like, and let's talk of something pleasanter."

"Faith, I'll do that! An'—an' if I sh'ud slip me arrum about your waist?"

"Oh, go ahead, if it will make you any more comfortable—there's no one in sight. Mercy! I said you might lean against my shoulder—not my head!"

"Sure it's the swate lips av ye I'm wantin', Dora—I'm perishin' for thim!"

"Well, then, you silly boy—if 'twill do you any good—"

What followed, the couple on the ledge couldn't see—but they were human enough to guess. As her lips touched his, Desmond thought her eyes the deepest, the most velvety-soft, he'd ever looked into. They seemed to draw the very soul of him—his brain reeled—a numbing stupor appeared to be creeping over him. Presently, the two below heard her voice again—in-describably soothing and persuasive.

"You poor, tired boy! I sha'n't permit that again—until—until you're stronger, at all events. You look as if you were quite done up. Really, I believe you're nearly asleep this minute. Well, never mind—there's no one looking. Sleep if you like—sleep, a sweet, restful sleep, all alone here with me—just the blue sky and the ocean and me. That's right—I knew you'd go in a moment—but your mind isn't asleep, is it? It's dreaming—dreaming of me—and—and the things you mustn't tell me. You'll tell me in your *dreams*, won't you? *That* can harm *nobody*. I thought so. What do I want to know—well—let me think. I seem to see a man in your mind. Sometimes I think I see two or three of them—sometimes, only one. Of how many are you dreaming, Patsy? What's that? Whisper more distinctly. One, you say? The keenest, cleverest fox of them all! His face? Smooth and handsome, with square chin, straight nose, fine eyes. His figure? That of a swordsman. The man of the Kiel Affair—is it he? Yes? And the one who saved Duke Hermann of Valdenburg—who manipulated the Carnstadt Alliance—who rescued King Alfonzo in the Pyrenees—who stole the Holland Diplomatic Notes in the heart of Berlin, and did fifty other things of equal daring and importance without leaving the slightest

trace? *One* man accomplished them all! Nonsense! He'd be superhuman! The same man? Great Heaven, Boy—who is he! Tell me—whisper it! Oh, my God! You're raving! Lord Trevor? Impossible! And yet—and yet—it all fits in—it might have been! Are you *sure*, Patsy? Before Heaven, are you *sure*! Ah, my Lord Viscount—there's a reckoning to be paid for all this—you know it as well as the rest of us! And, knowing it, you'll face the one who fires the shot like the gentleman you are—with a smile upon your handsome face as you slip into eternity. Master of us all! The pity of it—oh, the pity of it! But—who plays—pays."

On the ledge below, sat a girl with pale, horror-stricken face—and a Pathan who came of a Princely race. The one fingered a deadly automatic pistol, the other, a wicked Afghan knife—but they remained there motionless for another hour, when Desmond awakened from his hypnotic sleep and walked languidly away with Mrs. "Ben"—totally unconscious that he'd betrayed his Government. Before they were out of sight, Nan and the faithful Abdool had scrambled up to the moor and were strolling along in their wake, as if returning from a walk along the cliffs. It took all the girl's self-control to suppress the utter loathing she felt toward her hostess, and her determination to kill the woman before she could betray Lord Trevor—but her Oriental training now demonstrated its peculiar worth. As for Abdool—no man had ever guessed his thoughts from his facial expression. Abdool invariably struck before he expressed himself—as is the custom beyond the Khaibar. About three, Lammerford arrived with His Lordship in the touring-car and, making themselves presentable, went out upon the links with the golfers—Nan taking the first opportunity to inform her beloved "Guardy" of what she'd overheard.

"I don't think she has any accomplice in the house, Nan. The person who tapped those wires is either Mrs. "Ben," herself, or her sole confederate in the matter—and I fawncy if there were two of them, the other must have gone away awfter layin' those wires along the

cliffs. There'd be really no further use for him. I fetched Sabut-Ali down in the motor—he and Abdool will know every move the woman makes. Trust them for that. We'll take no more chances than we have to, but I fawncy she'll make no attempt to communicate with anyone until everybody's abed."

The remainder of the evening was a continual nervous strain to Nan—but Lord Trevor played his customary beautiful game of bridge, and was the life of the household. Even Lammerford, seasoned veteran that he was, felt a chill of apprehension. The woman's activities as a Judas in petticoats were nearly over—of that, he was perfectly sure. But half a dozen words from her—spoken where they might be carelessly repeated to anyone connected with Diplomatic affairs—would mean the passing of Trevor. Would the woman hold her tongue—continue to be their charming, tactful hostess—and eventually proceed as they expected? Or would she jokingly tax His Lordship with being a Secret Service Paladin, and defy him to disprove it—thereby insuring its repetition in other quarters by every guest in the house? He knew a woman possessed of that finesse which is the hall-mark of genius would inevitably choose the latter course as being the more certain in its results, and embodying the minimum of personal danger to herself. So he covertly watched her for evidence of such intention. But Mrs. "Ben" had compelling reasons for acting in secret. Apparently, neither Trevor nor Lammerford had the least suspicion of what she had discovered—and, in her calculations, Nan and the Afghans were negligible factors.

The household retired about midnight—Sir John leaving the Viscount and Lammerford in the smoking-room to finish their cigars, when he went upstairs. Half an hour later, they extinguished the lights and concealed themselves in a corner of the hall.

As the clock was striking one, a shadowy figure crept softly down the stairs and opened a door which led to the cellars. Silently following, they passed through the dynamo-vault—in which current for the house lights was generated—and down a narrow passage

to a vault under the lawn. Here, when she turned on the light, they saw a high-powered wireless outfit—and without a moment's loss of time, she threw in current from a storage battery. When she touched the key, there was a blinding flash which stunned her for a second. With an exclamation of dismay, she realized the wires were short-circuited, and switched off the light—returning so quickly that the watchers had barely time to conceal themselves until she let herself out of the house by a side door. As the night was pitch-dark and she never thought of looking around, the ghostly figures were close behind her when she reached the wireless station.

It took some moments to rouse Barney, who looked the surprise he felt when she insisted upon his sending a cipher message across England and the North Sea to Holland at that time of night. He objected that it would be impossible to arouse the Dutch operator at such an hour. She said it was a matter of life or death—that Holland would be expecting it. He became suspicious—and stood upon the Company's rules, which closed that particular station at ten P. M. Then she deliberately drew a revolver from under her cloak and shot him through the body—even as he fell, she threw herself into his chair and began feverishly calling the Holland operator.

Her shooting poor Barney had been done so quickly that prevention was impossible—but she hadn't time to repeat the call before Lord Trevor swept her hand from the key, and switched off the current. They looked each other in the eyes a full moment in a superb contest of will—then she rose from the chair with a sigh of resignation, as if owning herself defeated with victory almost within her grasp. "Your Lordship wins," she said.

Before he realized her intention—she picked up her revolver from the operating-table and sent a bullet crashing through her own heart.

As they silently looked down at the two figures upon the floor, Barney showed evidence of returning consciousness, and they found that her bullet had glanced upon one of his ribs, inflicting merely a flesh-wound of no great

seriousness. Leaving Abdool to look after him, they placed the woman's body upon a window-shutter and started back upon their long, wearisome tramp to the house—where they succeeded in getting it up to her own room without disturbing anyone. Then followed a minute examination of the papers in her desk, resulting in the discovery of two ambiguous letters from Colonel Pfaff, of the *Berliner Auswartiges Amt*—one of them containing a check for Eighty Thousand Marks, drawn upon the Reichsbank of Berlin.

The house-party scattered to neighboring country-places after breakfast—remaining in the locality but long enough to attend Mrs. Benham-Llarnoch's funeral. It was months before they could shake off the horror and shock of her inexplicable suicide. And for some time, Nan occasionally surprised a sad expression upon her Guardian's face.

"Who plays—pays! There was nothing else for her to do. Ah yes—but—if only she had chosen to remain a loyal English-woman!"

What Shall It Profit?

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

IN the front yard of Captain Elisha Dow's little white cottage there arose a tremendous din. Growls, snarls, staccato barks and agonized yelps made the morning air hideous. Mrs. Dow arose hastily from her seat opposite the captain's at the breakfast table and hastened to the front room windows, from whence came her wail for help, rising even above the unpleasant sounds of the combat.

"Oh, 'Lisha, 'Lisha! Quick!" she called. "They's a great, big dog out here in the yard jest a-killin' Cebby! Oh, hurry, can't you!"

"Thunderation! Drat that dog!" muttered the captain, but nevertheless he put down his coffee cup and shambled hastily to the scene of hostilities, while Mrs. Dow, standing in the open front-door, wrung her hands and hysterically besought her spouse:

"Stop 'em, 'Lisha! Oh, he's a-chewin' Cebby all up! Make him leggo! Do somethin'! Don't dance round like that jest a-watchin' of 'em while Cebby's gittin' killed!"

Thus urged, the captain advanced—

with some reluctance, it is true—upon the whirling, snarling mass, out of which the hair flew by the generous handful. Adding his own voice to the uproar, he delivered a series of vigorous and impartial kicks, and, watching his chance, stooped swiftly, and seizing the collar of his wife's bull terrier, managed to drag him away from the other yelping brute.

"Consarn yer, yer troublesome pest!" growled the captain, dragging Cebby to the door where his wife stood, and kicking him unceremoniously through it. "Always a-fightin' or up to some mischief. I'll learn yer to fight, once I git my hands on a likely switch."

"You wont do nothin' of the sort, 'Lisha Dow!" said his spouse hotly, stooping to gather the whining Cebby in her arms. "The idea! Poor Cebby! All bit up, aint he? And it wa'n't a mite his fault, either. That great, big dog jest come in the yard and jumped on him, didn't he?"

The captain smothered a remark which bade fair to be rather violent. "Awful shame about that yaller purp,

aint it?" he sniffed, as he examined carefully his right hand. "One or 'tother of them brutes bit me while I was separatin' 'em."

"The witch hazel is in the closet by the kitchen chimney," said Mrs. Dow, wiping the blood from the terrier with her apron.

"That dog'd oughter be killed," growled the captain, as he made his angry way to the kitchen. "Nothin' but some kind or 'nuther of a fuss with him all the time."

"Killed!" shrilled Mrs. Dow. "That's a pretty way to talk, aint it? I'd like to know what you'd do if some one come into *your* yard and jumped on you and begun to chew you up. I guess you'd feel you was justified in doin' some fightin'."

"Huh! I shouldn't feel I was justified in bitin' the grocer most every time he comes here, nor tearin' one of the legs outer the butcher's britches," he returned.

"They drove him to it," Mrs. Dow defended her pet. "They kep' a-plaguin' Cebby till they fair drove him to it."

"I suppose old Mis' Snow was a-plaguin' of him, too, the night she come here to call and he nabbed her and like to 'a' scairt her to death," he snapped.

"He see a stranger prowlin' round, and wa'n't takin' no chances," Mrs. Dow maintained. "That shows what a good watch dog he is."

"Huh!" the captain grunted again. "There aint been no peace in this house since you got that blamed dog two years ago. He's fit every dog that come nigh him and has put his teeth into more'n half the town. I should like to know jest how much hush money you've paid out to folks that he's bit so'st they wouldn't make no complaint to the selectmen—who'd 'a' ordered him killed long ago if folks hadn't kep' their mouths shut about him. I only wish to thunder he was dead."

"Well, I don't," said Mrs. Dow with angry decision. "He's as good a dog as ever was, and he aint goin' to be killed, neither; not so long as I'm here to stand up for him to them that would abuse him."

The captain said something under his breath, and having bound up his

bitten hand in witch hazel, he snatched down his cap from its peg, and, leaving his unfinished breakfast, stalked out of the house and down to the wharf, where his little oyster schooner, the *Letty B.*, was made fast, waiting for the last of her cargo of seed oysters to be taken out of her hold before departing to Southport for another load.

Gus Bean, who went in the schooner with the captain as cook, mate and man of all work, sprawled on the after house, enjoying a morning pipe, as the captain came stalking angrily down the wharf.

"Hi, cap'n! Wat's the matter with the flipper?" he demanded, noting the bandages on the captain's right hand. "Have yer cut ye?"

Dow stepped to the schooner's rail and thence to her deck.

"Darn that dog of Mis' Dow's!" he exploded. "Got to fightin' with another cur this mornin' and I had to separate 'em. One or t'other of 'em bit me. Most likely 'twas her dog that done it."

Bean grinned. "You do have considerable trouble with that purp," he sympathized.

"Trouble!" snorted the captain, settling himself on the house beside the other. "'Taint nothin' but trouble with him all the time. The cats that dog's killed, and the dogs he's fit and the folks he's bit is enough to turn a man's hair gray."

"Whyn't yer git rid of him?" said Bean.

The captain eyed him coldly. "I guess you don't know Mis' Dow," he said simply.

Again the other grinned. "Oh, I know she'd make a fuss about it, but there's ways of doin' it so'st there'd never be a yip outer her," he hazarded.

"For mighty's sake," said the captain, "if you got any scheme for gittin' clear of that dog without rilin' Mis' Dow all up, out with it. Let's hear it right off!"

"Well," said Bean, with a sage wag of his head, "supposin' you was to work it this way; supposin' you was to go up to the apothecary's and git somethin' that would make that dog sick. No, I don't mean nothin' like pizenin' of him," he explained, as the captain was

about to interrupt. "I mean somethin' that'll make him sorter peaked and droopy. Then Mis' Dow gits worried about him. Well, here we are goin' right down to Southport where there's a verterinary, so you gits worried about Cebby, too. You gits so worried you says to Mis' Dow you think you better take him to Southport with yer to have this hoss doctor look him over.

"The rest is easy. 'Twouldn't take no great sight of a sea to wash poor little Cebby overboard," Bean finished with a meaning wink.

The captain sat for some time turning over this scheme in his mind.

"The fust part of it's all right," he said slowly at last. "But that last part wont do. That sea washin' him overboard aint goin' to appeal to Mis' Dow at all. We gotter hatch up somethin' better'n that."

Again he was lost in thought for a time; and then he arose with a grim smile on his lips.

"Got it?" Bean questioned.

The captain bobbed his head emphatically. He seemed much pleased with himself.

"I'm a-goin' up to the drug store now to git the stuff," he said, and with no further enlightenment to the wondering Bean, he clambered to the wharf and disappeared in the direction of the village.

It was after supper when the captain came down to the schooner again. On his arm he bore a large market basket. He slid back the cover of this, and disclosed to Gus Bean's peering eyes, the curled up form of Cebby, asleep on an old shawl.

"Worked then?" said Bean with a delighted grin.

"Sure thing," said the captain. "I went up to the drug store and told 'em what I wanted and Sam Hall, he give me some white powder, and I shook it on Cebby's meat at dinner time. 'Long about two or so, Cebby was took pretty sick; whined 'round and finally fell right over in the middle of the floor and went to sleep. Mis' Dow, she was terrible scairt, and before I could say a word about takin' him down to Southport with us, she on with her things and run over to Doc' Knowles's.

Doc', he come back with her and looked the critter over, and said he didn't know a great sight about dogs. Then he up and played plumb into our hands.

"'Goin' down to Southport again soon, cap'n?" said he.

"'To-night,' says I.

"'There's a good veterinary down there,' says he. 'Whyn't you take the dog along and have him looked over. He could tell you better about him'n I can.'

"So Mis' Dow puts him in this basket and cautions me to look after him sharp, and here he is. Say, they got the rest of them oysters out of her?"

"Hold's clear," Bean replied.

"Then we'll start with the tide 'long about twelve or so, and git rid of Cebby," said the captain. "This is goin' to be jest the night to do it," he added, taking a comprehensive glance at the clouded sky.

"You aint said yet how you was intendin' to do it," Bean hinted.

The captain indulged in a chuckle. "Well, I got somethin' pretty slick," said he. "I figured it out that it had got to be done some way that wouldn't make Mis' Dow suspicious, and I thought and thought, and I come to the conclusion there wa'n't but one way, all things considered. I'm goin' to wreck this here schooner and Cebby's goin' to be drowned."

"What?" said Bean, his eyes widening in unbelief.

"I'm goin' to wreck her, I tell ye," the captain repeated. "I aint goin' to wreck her very bad; but I am goin' to put her on Little Round Reef. She'll lay easy there and can be pulled off without no great trouble, and she'll take in enough water to drown Cebby. I'm willing to stand for the time lost and the expense of pullin' her off to git rid of that cussed dog. You aint got no kick comin'. Your pay'll go on jest the same, if you help me out."

"Sure I'm goin' to help you out," Bean declared. "Say cap'n, that's a slick idea. Put her onto Little Round Reef and she'll lay easy as can be. No thrashin' nor smashin' like she'd do on Big Round Reef to west'ard; and I guess we can manage to see she takes enough water to fix Cebby all right."

"We'd better turn in and git some sleep, seein' as we'll have to be up a good part of the night," the captain suggested.

So Cebby was hustled into the disused fo'-castle and the hatch was shut tight—which operation aroused the dog sufficiently to allow him to send up a series of complaining whines and yelps, which presently died away.

At midnight the burring alarm clock awakened the skipper. He roused the sleepy Bean, and together they got the little craft under way. Outside the harbor it was blowing rather strong, and there was more or less of a sea running. The dull, scudding clouds were beginning to sprinkle rain.

"Jest the night to hit the reef," chuckled the skipper in Bean's ear. "'Twouldn't make nobody suspicious. Remember, she filled awful quick after she struck, and Cebby was drowned before we could git to him.

"Sure thing!" laughed Bean as he strode forward to stand watch in the bows.

At two o'clock the skipper was hailing him.

"Time you heard the bell buoy off'n Little Round," he shouted. "Can yer hear it?"

"Nary a sign of it," said Bean. "We'd oughter be hard by it at the rate we've come."

"Mebbe we've run past it," the skipper suggested. "Listen! Aint that the whistlin' buoy off Greenville that I can hear to wind'ard?"

Bean put a hand behind his ear and listened intently.

"That's her sure enough," said he.

"Then we gotter come about and stand back a piece. We're past Little Round. Sou'west by sou' 'll fetch it from here. Keep a sharp eye out, Gus. I don't want to ram her onto it any harder'n I have to."

It was beginning to rain hard now, and the wind was rising. The seas were beginning to hiss past them, flecked with angry white.

"Taint goin' to be too risky tryin' it to-night, is it?" Gus asked uneasily.

"You jest leave that to me," the skipper laughed.

All at once from the gloom ahead

came a wild howl from Bean. He sped aft, yelling at the top of his panic-stricken voice:

"Hard, down with yer wheel, skipper! Mighty thunder, we've miscal'lated somethin' awful! We're plumb onto Big Round Reef."

He sprang to the wheel and with the skipper threw his whole weight against it. But it was too late. With a shock that threw them to the deck, the little schooner smashed against the reef. Her foremast was ripped out with a mighty clatter and went crashing over the bows. A swirling, angry sea lifted the little vessel high in the air and brought her down on the jagged rocks below with a prodigious splintering, which told them the bottom was ripped clean out of her. Another sea tore them from the wheel and jammed them, choking and sputtering, against the house.

"Big Round Reef, and a night like this!" gasped the skipper. "We'll be lucky if we git out alive. Here!" He tore one of the companionway doors from its hinges—"Grab this and hang on. It's our only chance. She's goin' to pieces right now."

Overboard they went, clinging desperately to the door as the next frothing sea raked her. The thunder of the surf upon the reef nearly deafened them; they were all but drowned as the door, flung about like a cork in that maelstrom, twisted and turned, and seemed striving to free itself from their clutches.

But the tide, now strongly on the flood, whirled them straight across the reef, into the quieter waters beyond, and in another hour their feet had touched bottom. They fought their way through the surf, and well-nigh exhausted, sank down on the sandy shore of Dead Neck Bay.

"Well," said Bean faintly, when at last he was able to speak, "I guess you've done for Cebby."

There was a grunt from the captain. "I never really meant to actually lose the schooner," said he. "She stands me in a thousand or more above her insurance. But dang my eyes, Gus, it's wuth it—yep, wuth all that, to know that blamed dog aint goin' to be no more trouble to me."

It was late in the afternoon of that day, that Captain Dow, having been fitted out by the kindly people of Dead Neck Bay country, reached home. Mrs. Dow was in the kitchen when he opened the door and came in, a rather forlorn figure in clothes several sizes too large for him.

"I been wrecked," he greeted her. "Hit Big Round Reef about two this mornin'. Lost everything. There wa'n't no time to save a thing, not even—what? —*What?*" he ended, staring before him with bulging eyes.

For from the front room had come a growl, a hiss, a sharp yelp, followed immediately by the sound of scurrying paws. Into the kitchen, its tail of double size, its back arched, sped the cat, to leap madly for safety as represented by the lamp shelf; and below the shelf, leaping, bounding, whining his

disappointment at the quarry's escape, was Cebby.

"How'd he git here?" said the captain in a queer, choking voice.

"How indeed!" said Mrs. Dow. "I went down to the *Letty* last night, I was that worried about him. I was afraid, maybe, you wouldn't think to cover him up good. And it was lucky I went. There he was, the poor thing, alone and sick in that musty old fo'-castle, whinin' his heart out, and not so much as a coat to lay on. If that was the way you were goin' to treat him, I wa'n't goin' to trust him with you. So I brought him home. And you never so much as knew he was gone!"

Dully the captain slouched into the front room. Dully he drew a bundle of papers from his desk and began to figure. And anon as he worked, he shook his head and groaned.

The Great Potato Blight

By MARIAN BOWLAN

FRANKIE O'BRIEN was the greatest of leaders and the Irish Potatoes—Hard to Peel—had licked all the Polish teams in town. The Kosciusko Reds, the Cracow Nationals, and the Saint Stanislaus Nine had all gone down before the conquering Hibernians. And the Irish Potatoes—Hard to Peel—began to think that no parochial school in Northern Indiana could stand up before them.

Certain it was that Frankie O'Brien's picture had appeared in a certain auspicious number of the *New Fenian*, not in connection with the Irish Potatoes and base-ball, true—his mother had lately been elected to office in her sodality, and Frankie, in baby dresses, happened to make part of her only photograph—but the Team felt the

honor just the same. Also, his uncle was a policeman. Now, it is not customary to make a fuss over a "copper," but with the official in question a relative, the case becomes different.

So, Frankie O'Brien was a person of consequence. Oysterhouse Haggerty would talk in the same breath, of "our O'Brien" and one Three-fingered Brown. "The kid's nerve and command'll put him in one o' the big leagues some day, sure," he would fondly remark.

It is hard to discuss the Irish Potatoes without dwelling on this O'Brien, for he was manager, captain, pitcher, and publicity man. Gifted with the magnetism of personality which means leadership, he never had to drive his men by the supreme threat of—horrible thought

—resigning and going to work. The youngest Irish Potato—declaring himself thirteen, but on his mother's statement eleven—he was the life of the crop. Already, he had developed mannerisms, his trick of extending his tongue at an acute angle to his left molars when under mental or physical and, in particular, base-ball stress, being famous and much imitated. Frankie was inspiration, responsibility, ingenuity, and many other things. Above all, he was no “quitter.”

Well, when the Saint Stanislaus bunch had been battered to within an inch of extinction on the glorious diamond behind Measles' Brewery, the Irish Potatoes sought new foes to vanquish. There were no others in Big Bend proper. They had taken the Public School “kids” on for practice, but the Publics were simply not in their class.

The ennui that only conquerors know was broken one afternoon, right after school dismissal, as the Irish Potatoes were running and leaping over the stone pavement of Saint Patrick's yard and affectionately punching each other's countenances. Skunk Moriarty came hop-scotching around the corner of the Church and across the yard, tugging at his stocking as was his wont. Skunk's brother washed bottles at Measles' Brewery and Skunk would often “bum” for whole half-days to watch the fascinating process.

“Whatchethink, now, O'Brien and kids?” he began. “As I was sittin' on the bottles down to Measles, I heard, now, the biggest ka-pop, and when I run out to the road, I seen, now, a kid from the College on a, now, bicycle.”

“Aw, a sissy!” put in several of the Irish Potatoes.

“Naw, youse just wait,” admonished Skunk, drawing his sleeves across his moist nose. “This here kid from the College had, now, a puncture in one o' his, now, tires, and where do you think he was goin'?”

“Maybe to Wyman's to buy a white collar,” jeered Murphy Mix. “Them guys out there wear white collars every day.”

“Aw, quit yer kiddin'!” responded another I. P. unbelievably.

“Well,” Skunk hastily interposed, seeing the possibility of his being cheated out of a period of importance as the bearer of big news, “he was comin' here, now, to Father Quinn to fix up a, now, game.”

“A game!” The Irish Potatoes one and all were stirred.

“Yep, a game, out there, a week from, now, Saturday. What day is this?”

“Thursday. Naw, it's not. It'll be a Wednesday.”

“I don't think much of playing no bunch of white-livered girl babies like them Minims at the College.” Murphy Mix was ever pessimistic.

“Aw, jim'ny, the kids can't help it. Their mothers dress 'em that way,” Oysterhouse Haggerty commiserated.

“Yi, yi, yi!” Skunk let out a series of Tiger yells; he was the first to see Father Quinn approaching.

The curly-headed young priest with the sunny blue eyes was coming across the yard, with a stride not yet accustomed to a cassock.

“Father! Father Quinn!” The Irish Potatoes gathered around him.

“Yes, boys! You'd better play them. I know you're talking about the game with the Minims, or you'd never have stayed within twenty yards of school ten minutes after dismissal.” He loved to banter the Team.

“What say, O'Brien?” demanded several of the base-ball players of Frankie, who had stood thoughtful during the conclave.

The leader looked up. “Why, we'll play them, of course,” he announced with finality, withal a bit peevishly. Frankie was not feeling well, had not been feeling well for some time. The afternoon sun stung his head, and he was forced to extend his tongue in a northeasterly direction and to close his teeth hard upon it to nerve himself.

“And Hans Wagner! How we'll beat them!” ejaculated Oysterhouse, tossing up his cap.

“I hate to think what we'll do to them,” said O'Brien, and he snapped his black eyes.

“Same way as we feel,” chorused seven other Irish Potatoes and one substitute, Borgia Razzio, who—being an

"Eyetalyun" and beyond the Pale, but Irish at heart, and, at least, no Pole—was glad enough to get in anywhere.

"I say we need a lot of practice." The others paled before the Oracle.

"Right you are, Frankie," approved Father Quinn. "The Minims have the College boys to coach them, and a bat without nicks, and various other advantages."

"Come on down to Measles and let's begin right now," pronounced the Captain.

The Potatoes, augmented by a crowd of staring sisters, infant brothers, and various other satellites, who had gotten wind of the news, trooped away at the heels of their leader to prepare for what from now on was *the Game*.

Catastrophe fell upon the glorious nine of Saint Patrick's, the next Tuesday morning—catastrophe all the more bitter and stupefying because of the five days of good fortune and adulation that had preceded! Christian Doctrine lessons had gone unlearned, g'ographies lay dust-gathering in desks, unsmeared of grimy fingers, for the Irish Potatoes—Hard to Peel—were preparing for a game, for *the Game*, with the Minim Stingerees of Holy Cross College at Saint Francis de Sales Field. Batting averages were absent-mindedly handed in in place of arithmetic examples. And the roll call of the demoralized school might well have been taken in the empty lot, by courtesy, called a "diamond," in back of Measles Brewery.

Frankie O'Brien had been more than ever the Man of the Hour, more sought after than Father McGuire himself.

The Irish Potatoes had the backing of the authorities, too, for were not the good Sisters making them wonderful new base-ball suits? Regular uniforms they were, bright green with harps of gold paper for emblems. Twenty-nine cents apiece and three months in which to pay!

Every one was interested. Skunk Moriarity, with a tuft of his red hair sticking through the hole in his hat like thatch and the fat freckles on his plump cheeks shining in the sun, had reported—"Whatchethink, fellows? Old Nicholson's goin' to set us up to a

lunch-bag apiece and strawberry pop, one bottle to three, before the Game." "Old" Nicholson kept the school-store.

"Yes, he will," Murphy Mix had decided. "Then, the lunch-bags aint got no prizes in, and the pop's a year old." Murphy may have had Faith and Hope but he was certainly weak on Charity.

It was Oysterhouse Haggerty who exploded the news of the catastrophe in the peg-room just before the bell rang. His entrance was a tempestuous one.

"It's O'Brien, fellows! He's sick, terrible sick. The hull family was up all night and the doctor there, and regular High Jinks. When Toothpicks passed the house this mornin' goin' for the milk, she seen that somethin' was wrong up and went in and ast."

"Gee!" ejaculated the Irish Potatoes.

"Do you think, now, he'll be on his, now, legs for the Game?" asked Skunk in the greatest perturbation.

"Yep, sure!" opined Oysterhouse. "But jim'ny, the poor kid'll have to take med'cine—med'cine, mind you, pills and maybe Cod Liver Oil."

A shade of sickly reminiscence overspread the faces of all.

"You can't tell me that a kid who's as sick as you say O'Brien is 'll be out by Saturday," said Murphy Mix. "He's got typhoid."

"Why, how'd you know, Mur?" Oysterhouse asked wonderingly. "That's what they called it, typhoid, and I couldn't remember. But aw, sure, he'll be all right. Let's go down and see him."

The peg-room opened on the hall. With athletic agility the Irish Potatoes bolted and made for the home of their stricken leader.

In the neat little frame house with its trim garden, for which the elder O'Brien was paying out of his wages at the Plough Works, in the bed-room next the parlor, upon the downiest of feather ticks and between sheets that came out of his mother's wedding chest only on state occasions, lay Frankie, chief of the Irish Potatoes. Offsetting the dismal pictures on the wall, the Siege of Drogheda, a Last Supper—in colors that had once been brilliant—Sunset on Fontenoy, and a very dolorous Saint Sebastian, were bright, vel-

vety red geraniums and a canary bird, making a dash of color in a sweet-smelling sick-room. A blessed candle of creamy wax loomed up on the dresser.

The nine trooped in, and all on tip-toe, and decidedly awed, ranged themselves around the bed. Frankie's mother bolstered him with pillows and the leader of the Irish Potatoes began to address his men. From the pinched little face as white as the sheet, the black eyes glittered like fire, and the hair usually parted so jauntily over the clear brow, was matted to unrecognition. Frank tried to assume his familiar gesture with his tongue, but failed through sheer weakness. He contented himself with sticking it against the inside of his cheek, lifted his right hand, and pronounced:

"Fellow Irish Potatoes, sickness has put me down. But don't lose your nerve; remember that without me you are still 'Hard to Peel.' Conquerors of the Poles, whip those Minims and whip 'em well, for old Saint Patrick's! Oysterhouse, you go in as pitcher; put the Dago on third base. And play ball, men, play ball. Of course, you'll win. No question! But lick 'em through and through. Make them remember the day they first heard the name, Irish Potatoes. And—"

"Frankie, I think you've talked long enough, now," said his mother.

The visitors gave a few preliminary shuffles of the feet, cheered an "O'Brien, O'Brien, O'Brien!" and shambled out with furtive looks at the array of medicine bottles on the dresser.

If the Potatoes had delayed their visit one day longer, their prostrate leader could not have given them that ringing speech. For prostrate he now was. The bones of his wiry little body made ridges in the bed covering and a red spot gleamed on either cheek. The active ball-player lay quite still and docile, now. For hours, he would have his mother by him, telling over the tale of the Great Wind, of the Dublin Fair, the Fall of Tara, and then he would ask for tunes, "Oh the Days of the Kerry Dancing" and "Rory One More." And when the canary sang too loud, Mrs. O'Brien would say—"Be still, Daniel O'Connell."

But although Frankie lay always quite

still and peaceful, one curious desire obsessed him. The morning of the second long day, Anna Nelligan had called. As she lifted Frankie's thin, little hand in parting, his dull eyes fastened on her fingers.

"Anna," he said, in a weak little voice and bashfully—"mayn't I wear your rings?"

"Wear my rings! Why, of course you may, dearie." The girl laughed heartily.

Mrs. O'Brien expostulated. What would Frankie be doon' with Miss Anna's rings? But the girl slipped them on his fingers and Frankie gazed at the ornaments in supreme content.

The same transaction occurred when Julia Sullivan came; and Mrs. Flaherty, and Julia Duffy, until Frankie's bony little fists resembled those of Salome. All day long he would change the rings about and try new effects.

Toothpicks Haggerty, who liked to be around in any unusual situation, reported every three hours, with bulletins of the progress of the Irish Potatoes. The girl derived her cognomen from the thinness of her legs; no amount of skirts would have made Toothpicks "stand out," and as she never wore but one, the effect was always a look of incompleteness. She kept constantly tossing back out of her eyes a mane of straw-colored hair.

"Charlie"—Charlie was Oysterhouse's family name—"Charlie says to tell you the Team's doin' noble, Frankie. Practice every afternoon and Father Quinn there till they can't see the ball no more in the dark, and catch at recess and at noon in the yard. They're missin' you somethin' awful, but o' course they can whip the Minims anyhow."

But the unhearing Frankie had never any messages to send back by Toothpicks. He had forgotten all about the Irish Potatoes and base-ball. He was sick; and his rings, now grown to a wholesome collection, absorbed all his time and attention.

Although various Irish Potatoes called from time to time, the smell of med'cine rendered them incapable of close attendance. Not until Thursday night did they despair of O'Brien's "goin' to bat on Saturday." Then they pooled and sent him two bottles of strawberry pop.

The Great Day arrived. Surrounded by a mob of fans—who were following on foot—nine triumphant, confident, glowing Irish Potatoes climbed into a hoary vehicle built long since for four persons, and amid cheers and prophecies of certain victory, were off—toward the St. Joe Bridge, where started the two-mile road out to the College where they were to whip the Minim Stingerees.

Since early morning, Frankie, particularly delirious, had been tossing on his bed of sickness; even the rings sparkled unheeded. The hours passed. About one o'clock, he grew quieter, with a dangerous calm. At two and three, more so! At four, he raised his head a bit at the sound of some one's rushing into the house.

"Frankie! Frankie!" and Toothpicks burst into the room.

"Yes!" It was the first time he had answered her.

• "Oh, Frankie, Frankie, the Irish Potatoes"—she moaned and gasped for breath. "Yes—Yes, the Irish Potatoes! What about them?" He was sitting up.

"The Minims were licking them thirty to nothin' at the end of the sixth. Oh, Frankie, don't you know the Potatoes was to play the Minims to-day?" she pleaded.

A glimmer of light passed over Frankie's pale face. He pronounced slowly—"Yes, I remember now. On Saturday, at the College! Is this Saturday?"

"Yes, and oh—oh, Frankie! The score was 30 to 0 against us in the sixth."

"Thirty to nothing!" An expression of terror and disbelief overspread his countenance.

"Y-e-u-s," sobbed Toothpicks brokenly. "It was terrible. They was just killin' us and—"

Frankie gave a great spring from his bed and stood on the floor.

"Oh—oh, Frankie, you mustn't get up, you mustn't! Your Mother's just stepped in next door. I run all the way in from the College to tell you."

But the sick man was not listening. Precipitately he pushed Toothpicks out of his way. Then, with a sudden instinct of propriety, he turned back, snatched a quilt from the bed with his

shaking, jeweled hands, threw it over his short little night-shirt, and weakly tottering at first, but gaining strength and a running pace, made off down the hall and out of the house.

Toothpicks screamed wildly at the top of her voice—"Frankie, Frankie, oh, come back! You'll die, you'll get killed, you'll be murdered and burned." Tearing at her straw-colored hair, she ran and filled a pitcher of water in her excitement, then dashed to the corner and sent in an alarm of fire.

Frankie O'Brien was at the other corner now, flying along. Already windows were being raised and people appeared at doors. As the runner turned into Main Street, he heard some one say—"Forty-two to Nothing." "Forty-two to Nothing!" Young O'Brien groaned, but kept right on. In the middle of the second block, a quilt slid from his shoulders, and a string of glittering rings marked his course behind. On he tottered, staring eyes set toward the Saint Joe bridge. The corner of the third block! People began to shout; horses suffered scares; cries of "Stop that kid! He's crazy!" set in. On—on kept Frankie! The Irish Potatoes going down to defeat and he not there to pull them up again? But he *would* be there, to save the day and the honor of the Team. Why hadn't he known before? What had happened? That long dullness! Oh, yes, he had been sick. But—30 to 0! No—42 to 0, some one had said! Impossible! It couldn't be! The Irish Potatoes? Bells were ringing in his burning head; bees were buzzing in his hot throat; nuts were cracking underneath his shivering feet; and the edges of the night-shirt flapped against his quivering legs. All at once, a flash of something dark crossed in front of him. He stumbled—then felt himself being lifted up. He opened his eyes on a shining silver star, and sobbed—"Oh, Uncle Tim, it wasn't 42 to 0 *against* the Irish Potatoes?"

"Shure, no! 42 to 0 *for* the Oirish Potatoes. They're still 'Hard to Peel.'"

And Frankie lapsed into blissful unconsciousness on a blue-coated shoulder.

It was well on in June and rose time, before Frankie grew well enough to act

as host at the supper which his mother gave in honor of his recovery.

It was a gala occasion. The guests, the Irish Potatoes, came all in linen collars and with auspiciously scrubbed faces. Their conduct towards their sick leader had been noble, if withal, a little strained.

About two weeks after the day of Frankie O'Brien's Outing—as it went down in the history of the neighborhood—Oysterhouse had related to the Captain, only then conscious once more, the detailed story of the game. Oysterhouse carried it off manfully, with never a betraying sign.

Thus, Frankie walked in the blissful gloaming of ignorance. The Potatoes had judged Skunk the most likely "to leak," but Skunk proved a rock of reliance. Murphy Mix was the unfortunate one.

The Team sat at the O'Brien family table, extended at one end by means of the ironing board. There was heaped thereon a collation, indeed; cold ham, cold tongue, cold turkey, cold corned-beef, hominy, raisin bread, three kinds of pickles, barley candy, floating island, pickled peaches, tutti-frutti ice cream and doughnuts. And all went merry as a circus day parade—until the catastrophe.

Now, Murphy Mix, having imbibed too freely of the pickled peaches, grew light-headed.

"Whatcheknow, fellows!" he shouted. "One o' them Minim Mamma boys come along the other side o' Main Street to-day with one o' these here

tooters and yelled over to me like a poll parrot—'Forty-two to Nothin'. Maybe I wasn't sore, when everybody knows we might have beat 'em if—"

But alas, for that fateful and enlightening "might have if!" Frankie, standing with some idea of a toast—a glass of strawberry pop uplifted in his hand—convulsively clenched the tumbler, slid quickly down into his seat, and simply closed his eyes—and kept them closed tight, as if to lock out some bad dream.

"Aw, whatche talkin' about, Murphy," began Oysterhouse with instant tact. "You know—"

Frankie opened his black eyes and said—"Never mind, Charlie; I understand now."

And then he sat quite still, his gaze fixed on space.

The others renewed slaughter, even on the tutti-frutti ice cream, with but little heart. For minutes no one spoke. Toothpicks, alone, waiting on the table, woman-like, sobbed audibly. With bowed heads everyone studied his own plate. Oysterhouse, however, was having it out on Murphy's legs and feet under the table.

Absolute, grim silence! The cuckoo clock ticked loudly.

Then Frankie O'Brien rose. In those few minutes, his face had become that of an old man.

"Irish Potatoes," he said with the tone that Washington must have used in his Farewell Address, "I hereby hand in my resignation from the Team. I am going to work to-morrow!"

"THE GIRL IN THE CASE"

SHE is a lively maiden—"The Girl in the Case." As a matter of precise fact there were two of her; and throughout the voyage from Sandy Hook to Liverpool, they kept Mr. Gordon Ross guessing. First he received a mysterious message; then he was drugged by a subtle hyacinth perfume; then he was accused of murdering the purser's clerk; then—but read for yourself. This fascinating steamship romance will appear in the July issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.



The Call of Paradise

By KINGSBURY SCOTT



THERE was just enough breeze rippling the lake to give Dave Conners' schooner headway around the point and let her slide to her moorings at the long wharf in Paradise harbor. It had been a year since the skipper and his lively little *Rambler* had slipped into Paradise bay, but Paradise gave no signs of a very cordial welcome. With a careless swing of his broad, square shoulders, Dave Conners leaped from the rail to the wharf, carrying the bight of the line with him. Dropping it carelessly over a pile, he snapped the dirt from his hands, and waited for Tom Doran, his combination crew, cook and mate, to make fast on deck. Doran had run out a hawser forward and the *Rambler* was snug in her berth.

With the simple orders to Doran that he was to stand by until the skipper returned, Dave strode away up the wharf, smiling to himself as he looked into the unfriendly faces of the fishermen and dock loafers, few of whom returned his nod of greeting. The skipper was a young man, hardly more than thirty, with a heavy, yet sharply angled frame. His face would have been handsome had it not been creased on one side by a thin scar which reached from his eye to the corner of his mouth. His eyes were steely blue and piercing, but their impressiveness was lost when they reflected the little sneer of a smile, which constantly played over his face. There was every indication of the dare-devil in his countenance, with its half hidden cruelty and hardness. His free stride and the reckless swing to his square shoulders

were evidence enough of his absolute indifference to the world and what it thought of him.

"He's got his nerve, all right," remarked one of the fishermen. "With the record he's got around here, I should think he'd stay away. It aint no good that he's here for. You can bet on that."

If Dave heard the remark he did not betray it. Instead, the little sneer of a smile came over his face, as though he were defying them.

"Howdy, boys," he said lightly.

"Howdy, Dave," they mumbled, as he passed along the wharf toward the town.

Paradise made no pretention of being much of a town, but it was the chief city of Paradise Island—itself hardly more than a crescent shaped hump of earth rising out of the northern end of Lake Michigan, along with a group of sister humps. On the east was the Michigan mainland, visible in clear weather, and across the expanse of blue-green water, was the west coast of the lake. On that side the mainland was never to be seen from Paradise Island. But the skyline was frequently blackened by the smoke of the lower lake freighters, in the summer, as they passed down-bound or up-bound, keeping well clear of the islands, where shoals and reefs threatened to pile them up with their cargoes of grain or coal.

The town of Paradise, which covered practically the entire area of the island, was peopled wholly by fishermen, fishermen's wives and fishermen's children

—and not a few fishermen's widows. Wet reels and shanties and dories were scattered along the shore of the little bay, while a dozen trim schooners composed the fishermen's fleet. At four o'clock on almost any afternoon in the season of navigation, the whole dozen could be found moored at the long wharf, where their crews slid the boxes of white-fish and trout along the dock. It was then that the sharp knives of the cleaners and dressers flew with lightning speed and the reels creaked and sang as the net packers spread out the masses of slimy, weedy mesh to dry in the wind and sun.

Nearly everyone in Paradise knew Dave Conners because once he had been a Paradise man. His father had been a fisherman, who had owned the *Rambler*, one of the trimmest and liveliest little schooners in the fleet. But the elder Conners had long since joined his wife in the little churchyard of Paradise. The two grass-grown graves were the only claim which young Dave Conners had on Paradise, now he had long since deserted the island. Those who remained regarded him with suspicion; his father's friends believed in him as long as they could, but as suspicion grew stronger against him, they too, were compelled to desert him.

They lived a simple life, these people of Paradise, but theirs was a standard of hard work; no good could come of idling and because Dave Conners was an idler, to them, at least, he was not all that a man should be. He had no nets and no shanty and yet he lived. Sometimes in the summer he took parties of tourists from the mainland for cruises about the lake, but in the fall there were no tourists, and the *Rambler* was always in commission until the snow began to fly. During all of that time Dave Conners slammed aimlessly around the lake. "How does he live?" asked the fishermen of Paradise.

When he landed in Paradise Bay, after a year's absence, the news traveled fast. It was early in October and there were no tourists aboard of the *Rambler*. The dock loungers soon satisfied themselves of that. Quickly the word went over the old town: "Dave Conners is here again!"

As for Dave—his scant welcome seemed to bother him but little as he swung carelessly from the wharf into the principal street of Paradise, nodding defiantly as he met some one he knew. He stopped only once, dropping into Tom Donovan's saloon, the only one in Paradise, to buy a pocketful of cigars, and there he returned the surprised look of the loafers with one of half insolence.

"Have a little something, boys," he invited and the half dozen shuffled to their feet hurriedly. He did not drink himself, but when the drinks were brought, he paid the bill and walked out laughing.

Leaving the bar, he continued up the long street to its end. Then he turned sharply and strode up a little hill at the top of which was the largest house in Paradise, painted pure white with green blinds. The great yard was surrounded by a white picket fence and the whole surroundings had a well kept and prosperous appearance. Without hesitancy he clanged through the gate and knocked boldly at the front door. A comely girl with the bluest of eyes and wavy brown hair opened it. She wore a blue frock which matched her eyes. In fact she was just the person one would expect to find in such a house. But her pretty face went white as she gazed speechlessly at her caller. Dave smiled at her surprise, but his eyes lost their steeliness, and a rare tenderness came into them, of which no one, who had seen them a short time before, could have dreamed them capable.

"Howdy, Dora," he said softly. "Didn't expect me, did you?"

"Dave!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing in Paradise?"

"Aint I welcome?" he asked with a grin. "Aint you glad to see me?"

"But I thought you never were coming back here?" she remarked, breathlessly. "They told me you didn't dare come back to Paradise any more."

"I'd dare go anywhere to see you, Dora," he said, softly. "That's why I'm here. Look here, girl. I aint much on sentiment, but I aint much different than anybody else. I'm human, when a girl like you gets a fellow by the heart, it aint easy to break away. Ever since I left here, child, I've been thinking about

you. I've done my best, but I can't seem to forget you. At last I got so bad I couldn't stand it any longer, and—well, I'm here. I had to come, Dora. I couldn't help. 'Twasn't meant that you and me should be separated, I guess."

The girl stood staring helplessly at him, her face drawn with anxiety and perplexity, but she was unable to speak. In his eyes there was a strange look of dumb appeal.

"Aint you going to let me come in, Dora?" he asked softly. "I'm sober and I aint going to steal anything. You needn't be afraid of me."

Silently she led him into the stiff, darkened parlor. "Sit down, Dave," she managed to say as though in a dream.

Dave dropped awkwardly into a stiff backed chair and placed his hat carefully on the floor. Dora raised the curtains and the yellow afternoon light streamed in across the figured carpet, the hair-cloth chairs shone in their exclusive cleanliness, and the marble-topped center table seemed uncomfortably spotless. The pictures stared down askance from the gilt-striped walls, and Dave, accustomed though he was to the rebuffs of a wild, rough existence, was decidedly ill at ease.

"I don't seem very welcome," he observed. "Nobody seems very glad to see me."

"Haven't you heard the reason, Dave?" inquired the girl in a gentle tone.

"I've heard nothing and I don't want to hear anything," he said roughly. "I suppose it's the same old story. Somebody's looking for me. Somebody's always after Dave Connors. Somebody's been after Dave Connors as long as I can remember, Dora—game wardens, fish wardens, revenue cutter men or somebody else. They know where I am; why don't they get me. I aint running away. I aint armed. They make me sick! They're afraid of me, everybody in this cussed place is afraid of me as if I was going to do 'em harm or blow up the town. What's the matter with 'em? I aint a desperado!"

"But Dave," began the girl.

"No, no!" he interrupted. "I don't want to hear anything. I don't care for the whole pack of 'em. I came to see

you, that's all. You're the only one in Paradise that counts with me. You're all I've got here, and I've been thinking and dreaming about no one else for a year. Why, girl, sometimes when I was standing my trick at the wheel out there on the lake, and everybody else was below, I'd see your face out ahead and you'd be smiling at me. You'd be smiling at me just as you used to smile at me, when I'd come up the hill from the dock after the schooner was in. Then I'd almost go crazy to see you, little girl. Seemed as if I'd have to run the old *Rambler* into Paradise just to have one more look at you. But I'd fight it off, and I've been fighting it off ever since until now, Dora. To-day it's been worse than ever and I couldn't stand it any longer. Here I am, loving you as much as ever, Dora—more, little girl, more! It aint any use. We can't fight what's meant to be."

"Don't, Dave, don't!" pleaded the girl. "Oh, I thought we settled all that a year ago! It can't be any different now. You must forget it, Dave! Oh, you must! You must!"

"Well, I wont!" growled Dave. "I've made up my mind that you belong to me, Dora, and I'm going to have you, that's all. What's the sense of breaking our hearts, when we know that we love each other, just as much as ever? I've made up my mind to make a new start, but its no use doing it without you, I've got a little money laid away, and I've got my eyes on the best outfit on Lake Michigan. I can buy it cheap and the fellow's waiting for my answer. We'll settle down here or on the mainland or any place else you say." There was a note of pleading in his tone, and defiance had fled from his countenance to make way for the pallor of a terrible earnestness.

"Dave!" cried the girl. The tears welled up to her blue eyes, and she shook her head sadly. "It's too late now, Dave," she continued in a half frightened tone. "It's too late. You mustn't dream any more."

"Why is it too late?" he demanded. "You told me once that you'd never have anybody else. You sent me away a year ago because, you said, I wasn't living right, because I'd ruined my repu-

tation. Now when I come back and tell you I'm going to turn over a new leaf, you tell me it's too late. Dora, who's been settling you against me?"

Dora shook her head again. "Nobody, Dave," she answered brokenly. "Nobody can do that. Haven't I always fought for you since you were a boy? When you went away, I thought you knew then, that we must give up all the dear little plans we used to make about getting married some day. I thought you would understand. Oh! Don't you suppose it was hard for me? Don't you suppose it's hard for a girl to give up some one she's loved ever since she was old enough to know anything at all—because he'd not listen to her; because he didn't want her enough to save his reputation and hers? Dave, don't you see how it hurt? Then to have you come back at this time and bring it all up! Dave, boy, why didn't you listen to me?"

"There, there now, little girl," Dave pleaded awkwardly. "Let's forget all that. I've said I was going to start new, haven't I? Aint that enough?"

Dora gazed at him helplessly. "Oh, I can't tell you. Can't you understand, Dave?" she cried.

The front door banged and a heavy step sounded on the hall floor. Dave glanced up as a shadow darkened the parlor doorway.

"Howdy, Captain," he greeted cordially.

"I heard you were here, Dave," answered the newcomer, solemnly. "I hardly believed it but I see it's true. When you went away, I heard you'd said you'd never set foot in Tom Martin's house again. You don't keep your vows very well, do you, lad?"

"I reckon, I'm master of my own vows, Cap," returned Dave defiantly. "If I make a vow, I don't know who's to keep it but me. Beside, I came to see Dora. I went away in a huff a year ago, and I've suffered for it since, God knows!"

"You've cause to suffer a little, boy," replied Captain Martin.

"Don't be harsh, Dad," anxiously requested the girl. "Dave's going to make a new start and he's been telling me about it."

The captain took but little heed of the girl, though his great round face grew sterner and his eyes narrowed down to slits as he faced Dave. The owner of the house remained standing, looking down at the skipper of the *Rambler*, who stared back at him with the old insolent gleam in his eyes.

"Dave," said Captain Martin, at last, "I knew your father. Mack Connors and I were old friends. I was with him when he died. I had been with him when your mother died, and we were pretty close together. For that reason, I've always stood up for you, Dave. Your father expected me to look out for you and I tried to do it as long as you'd let me. When you were just a lad, your father and I used to talk some about you and—Dora, there. She was just a baby. We both planned that you two should get married some day. When he died, I felt as if you sort o' belonged to me. But you got away from me somehow and went wild.

"I don't know what you've been doing since I lost my hold on you, but I've never felt as though I could go back on you, and I'd do most anything for you now for Mack's sake. They've been saying some nasty things about you, boy, but I've always refused to believe them. I didn't want to believe them. As I said, I don't know what you've been up to all of this time, but it hasn't been anything that's helped your reputation. I couldn't trust my little girl to you, and I told her some of the things that were being said about you. That's as far as I went. She's a wise girl and she realized that marrying you wouldn't do either of you any good. You didn't care enough about her to be steady, and with her it was just school-girl love. She'd been brought up to expect to marry you."

The captain paused for a moment to watch the effect of his words on the visitor. Then he continued with a ring of real regret in his voice.

"Dave," he began. "There's no use mincing matters. If you take my advice you'll get out of Paradise as soon as the *Rambler*'ll carry you. The weather's getting bad and you can't get away if you wait much longer. The wind's hauled to the sou'west outside and going

to the north'ard sure. You know what that means this time of the year. If you get out now you can run under cover of the mainland or scoot before the wind for Georgian Bay."

Dave laughed carelessly. "What's to hinder my lying windbound here in Paradise a while?"

"There's this much, Dave," answered the captain earnestly. "You're being hunted. There's a nasty story, a mighty nasty story, that you've been lifting nets that don't belong to you. Somebody that knows about it has squealed, that's all. There's always somebody that'll squeal, you know, and they're pretty well posted over on the mainland. I was over there this morning selling to Kaethers and it was the talk of the place. They know you're in these waters somewhere and they are figuring you'll drop into Paradise. They were getting ready to send out a tug with the sheriff and wardens on board and you can make up your mind that they'll look for you here in Paradise. It's the first time I've ever helped a man get away from the law, my boy, but—I knew your father."

"Curse 'em!" growled Dave Conners. "What do I care for the pack of 'em? They're always laying something at my door. They're always looking for me for one thing or another, but they haven't got me yet. Besides they haven't got anything against me."

"Well, you'd better get out, Dave," warned Captain Martin. "You'd better get out while you can."

Dora's white face flushed with indignation and her eyes glowed with anger. "It's a lie! It's a lie!" she cried. "Dad, I know it's not true! I won't believe it of Dave! Perhaps he's wild and reckless, but he wouldn't do that."

Captain Martin wheeled suddenly and although he gave no orders, the girl hurriedly left the room, her head high, her face white once more and her eyes flashing fire. Then the older man turned again to Dave.

"I believe, Dave, because I have to believe it, God help me!" he said sadly. "I know it because my nets were in the lot that you've lifted. I've missed nets before now but I thought they'd been carried away by the sea. I identified

mine to-day on the mainland. They were found with a lot of your stuff that's been seized over there. I wish it wasn't true, but it is! I didn't know who they were after at the time or I'd have lied."

"Let 'em prove it!" defied the skipper of the *Rambler*. "Let 'em prove it! I'm here to stay, Martin, until I get ready to go and you can't get me out of the way through any fear of them. I dropped into Paradise to-day to get Dora. She's mine. She's promised to me, I say, and I'm not going to give her up for you nor all of the wardens in Michigan!"

"Are you crazy, man?" cried Martin. "Dora's going to marry Bob Stevens and to-morrow's the wedding."

The defiance faded swiftly from Dave's face and his eyes lost their glint. His hands dropped weakly into his lap and he stared unseeing at the floor.

"Marry Stevens!" he said with an effort, "marry Stevens! Why she can't marry him. She don't care anything about Stevens. She loves me, Martin!"

"If she ever had any love for you, Dave," began the captain, "you killed it by behaving like an outlaw. But thank Heaven it was just school-girl love after all! She had never known any other man but you. She was broken up for a while, but when she began to realize the difference between you and a lad who was straight and steady it didn't take long for her to see her course right. She soon found you were more a wayward brother than a lover to her. Stevens is a good lad; she's going to marry him. He's doing well, with a schooner of his own and a good outfit. With what I'm going to give him, they'll be pretty well fixed."

"That's why I wasn't welcome?" mused Dave.

"I reckon it is," agreed the captain. "I'm sorry, Dave, but if you'd cared to, you'd have been as welcome as anybody, and more, in Paradise and in this house."

"She'll be happy with him," admitted Dave, still musing as though in a dream.

"She's been as happy as a lark, getting ready for the wedding, as happy as a lark. I expect she'll be upset by what's gone on to-day, with to-morrow her wedding day"

"I'm sorry I came back," announced Dave Conners.

"So am I, Dave," answered the captain. "Mighty sorry!"

"Well, I wont bother her again," announced the skipper of the *Rambler*. "I wont even bother her to say good-by. I'm going away. I'm going to get out—so far away that she aint likely to ever see me again. If she loves Stevens, she ought to have him, and I aint got no right to hurt her. She's a good girl, Martin, a good girl, and I'd like to see her happy. Tell her so for me. I've loved her a long time, Martin!"

II

It was dark when Dave Conners boarded the *Rambler* at the long wharf and the little breeze which coaxed the skipper and his ship into Paradise had freshened to a moderate gale. The western sky, still mellow with the farewell glints of the autumn sunset, was flecked with flying clouds. The choppy sea of the little bay lapped against the sides of the *Rambler* and the little schooner rose and fell with the wash.

Dave Conners had little to say to Doran as he climbed over the rail. In fact, he was even gruff in what he did say to his ship-mate, but Doran took little notice of that. The skipper was usually ill natured when he had been ashore. So the mate said nothing. That was the way he had managed to agree with Dave for several years.

"Stand by!" growled the skipper. "We're going to get out of this hole, while we can."

Doran looked anxiously at the weather and shook his head, but offered no reply.

"What in the devil are you standing there shaking your head for?" shouted the skipper.

"I'm thinkin' we'll have a bad night of it, Dave," ventured Doran. "We're light and the schooner's in no too good trim for bad weather, you know."

"What's the odds?" grunted Dave. "If she goes to the bottom, she goes and we'll go with her, that's all. Besides it aint for me nor you to pick our sailing weather. The whole pack o' devils from

the mainland are bearing down on us and we've got to be moving. They're out there now, somewhere, and heading for Paradise. I aint afraid of anything that carries sail or steam if I've got plenty of sea room and a good stiff breeze, but I aint anxious to be caught here like a rat in a trap."

Doran made no further remarks but went on with his work. His ideas agreed perfectly with the skipper's on this one question, at least.

"Better just give her a half reef, Doran," called the skipper. "It's blowing pretty fresh outside, but I don't want to take too much canvas off of her if we've got to run for it. She'll stand up under it, I guess."

With everything lashed fast for the heavy weather outside, the tackle creaked as the canvas slid up and the little *Rambler* swung out into the bay. As the breeze caught her, she heeled down and went foaming toward the blinking light at the entrance. Before she had reached the point, however, the red and green side-lights of a steamer rounded into view, rolling down with the swell, and Dave could make out the dim outline of a tug.

"There she is!" exclaimed the skipper of the *Rambler*. "Gad, we aint getting out of here any too soon!"

The sea was directly after the schooner and Dave held up to give her all of the benefit of the fair wind she could stand. He realized that he would pass close to the incoming tug but he hoped to race past with such speed and headway as to baffle his pursuers for the moment. The two boats were not fifty feet apart when they passed, with the *Rambler* rail down and the white foam rushing along her sides. The flying schooner attracted the attention of those on board of the tug and Dave heard some one hailing him.

"Ahoy, there!" shouted a voice with a note of authority in it. "What schooner is that?"

"The *Teedledeedee* of Terre Haute!" shouted Conners.

"Come about, there! I want to take a look at you!" ordered the voice from the tug.

"Go to the devil!" invited Dave, as the *Rambler* rushed away.

Dave Connors heard the bell clang on board of the tug and he could see her lights swinging around. He knew that she was putting about and that the race was at hand. By the time the red and green lights were headed for her, the *Rambler* was outside, riding with long, hissing rushes on the white combers.

"He'll have a fine chase of it, if he follows me long," mumbled Dave. "I'll drown the whole pack of 'em."

But the tug was coming. Doran and the skipper watched her lights rise and fall as she tore ahead. An hour passed and the red and green lights grew dimmer but the pursuer held on. Meanwhile the *Rambler* was fairly flying. Great combers rushed up at her stern and threatened to crush her, but caught her instead with a rush of white foam and hurled her on. Overhead, puffy clouds scudded across the half moon, until at last they clung together in a mackerel sky and blotted out the lunar light entirely.

The night grew darker and blacker, until at last great cold drops of rain swept down and beat into the faces of the men on the schooner. The wind screeched louder through the rigging and the crew of the *Rambler* were compelled to shout at one another, although they stood together on the after deck. Far astern they could still catch an occasional glint of the tug's lights. At last Dave could not pick them up even with his night glass. He turned to Doran with a grin.

"I guess they wont bother us!" he shouted. "But they'll have a devil of a time getting back to Paradise, against this sea! If this breeze holds out we'll be to the straits by morning."

Doran nodded and grinned his reply.

"Hope she drowns 'em all," he mumbled, as he sent Doran below to get a bite to eat.

When Doran appeared on deck within half an hour, he was fortified against the weather by a good mug of hot coffee and the hurried meal he had taken. Without a word he took the wheel in his mittened hand and Dave went below.

After a couple of generous slices of bread and a cup of coffee, the skipper tumbled into his bunk, clothes and shoes still on, and was asleep almost instantly,

notwithstanding his troubled day. So soundly did he sleep that he was not awakened until Doran's shout down the companionway aroused him and brought him tumbling out of his bunk. In a moment he was on deck. The first streaks of the dawn were spreading wickedly across the stormy sky and the first dim light was touching the black, angry sea.

"What's wrong, Doran?" shouted the skipper.

"Looks like a wreck ahead, sir—off to the north'ard on the starboard a bit," answered the man at the wheel, as the skipper picked up the glasses.

"Sure's the devil!" exclaimed Dave.

"Looks as though there was somebody hangin' to it, don't it?" asked Doran.

"By Gad, yes!" answered Dave, still holding the glasses on the tossing flotsam. "The poor devil's in a bad way too. Head her up a little, Doran, and we'll try to give him a hand. It's a poor show we've got in this sea, though."

"Can we make it, Dave?" asked Doran, anxiously. "We're makin' pretty bad weather ourselves."

"We'll try it!" shouted the skipper. "I may have the whole state of Michigan after me but I never let a poor devil die without turning over a hand to help him. They can't say that about me."

Still flying before the wind, the little schooner approached the spar and the bits of broken timber to which a man was clinging, shoulder deep in the water. As the *Rambler* flashed past in a curtain of foam, Dave seized a heaving line and swung it out over the combers. It fell across the spar to which the unfortunate man was clinging, but he was too weak to grasp it, and it was dragged hopelessly beyond him.

"Hold on, old man!" shouted Dave. "We'll get you!"

Well to the leeward of the wreck the *Rambler* came about, into the very teeth of the hurricane. Great, white, wicked combers swept her from stem to stern and she trembled from the shock as she beat out on the first leg of her tack. Time after time the spume rose high above her and tons of solid water pounded her decks, threatening to crush them down. Dave had taken the wheel and he held her up stubbornly to her punishment. His eyes flashed their old

defiance and he smiled over the gallant fight his little schooner was making against the awful odds. Death threatened him momentarily but he laughed aloud at it, as though he enjoyed its efforts to grasp him.

He had judged well and the back reach brought the wreckage well under the *Rambler's* starboard quarter. The skipper ordered Doran to take the wheel and hold her to her point. Dave again took the heaving line and coiled it carefully. In an instant he turned a slip noose with a long bight. As he stood at the rail, awaiting the instant to cast, he had a good look at the half dead man in the wreckage. One arm was clasped about the spar, while the other hung limply down into the water. A piece of broken timber, jammed up behind, kept the body in place. In time the broken timber would work away in the sea and the man would slip from his hold to death. It was only a matter of minutes at least. With a half conscious effort the unfortunate raised his face, and Dave stared. A wild look of joy came into his face and the line dropped to his side.

"It's Bob Stevens," he cried.

Swiftly the wreckage was nearing him and the instant to cast was almost at hand, yet he hesitated, the look of exultation in his face. For the flash of a second the skipper of the *Rambler* saw Dora's face ahead of him, smiling in the old way; then the line whirled out over the sea. Dave saw the noose settle over the unconscious man's shoulders. With a quick jerk the bight slipped snug and Dave hauled away with all of his strength. Slowly the human burden came through the water and Dave Conners seized the unconscious form and hauled it to the deck. Loosening the noose, he dragged the limp body below, while Doran looked on silently. A drink or two of whisky, forced between the cold lips, and a cup of hot coffee afterwards, brought the color back to the rescued man's face and he opened his eyes.

"Thank God!" he whispered thickly.

"Thank God for what?" asked Dave.

"I'm going to be married to-morrow!"

"To-day, you mean," replied Dave.

"What's that?" asked the rescued one,

stupidly. "Oh yes, I guess I'm a little off. I've been there so long. Got caught in the bad weather last night, you know. I was trying to beat back to Paradise so I'd be there in time for the wedding to-morrow — to-day, I mean. My schooner couldn't stand up under it and she went to pieces under me. The boys are all gone, I guess, and I've been in the water since midnight. I thought it was all up. It's hard to die when you know somebody's waiting for you ashore!"

"It aint so hard when you aint got anybody ashore, I reckon," remarked Dave bitterly.

The rescued man looked at Dave sharply, squinting his eyes painfully.

"You're Dave Conners, aint you?" he asked. "I'm just getting so I can see a little. You didn't know about the wedding, did you?"

"Yes."

"And you picked me up just the same? What you going to do with me?"

Dave looked at him sharply. "Good Lord! I aint a heathen, man!" he cried. "She's made her choice, and she's waiting for you, Stevens. She loves you, not me. And I love her enough so that I want her to have everything she wants! Great Heavens man, you don't know, though, how near I came letting you go to the bottom!"

Both men were silent until at last Dave continued. "But it was her that saved you, not me. You can thank her, Stevens!"

Stevens looked at him mutely and Dave went on without noticing.

"I'm going to run back to Paradise and put you ashore there. The whole state of Michigan's after me with a tug that's lying in the bay. That's no odds now. You're going to marry Dora, because she's been as happy as a lark getting ready for the wedding. Stevens, by Gad, I hate the sight of you! But she wants you and she's going to have what she wants, if I can give it to her. If you aint good to her, I'll come back! When I come back it will be after you—and I'll get you! Now get into that bunk and sleep until I call you!" Before the rescued man could answer Dave was up the companionway.

All day the *Rambler* tacked and

pounded and bucked into the hurricane. All day Stevens lay deep in an exhausted sleep in his bunk. Late in the afternoon Doran went below to arouse the sleeper and when the bridegroom opened his eyes, he felt refreshed and strong. Doran gave him another cup of steaming coffee.

"We're close in," Doran informed him. "The skipper's goin' to run in behind the light-house point out of the sea and put you ashore. We'd get nabbed if we ran up to the wharf; there's a gang waiting for us there."

On deck, Stevens found Dave at the wheel. The schooner was just rounding for the run in and though the afternoon light was waning, the bluffs of Paradise stood out plainly.

"Feel better?" asked the skipper, apparently not noticing him.

"All right now, Dave. Thanks to you."

"No thanks to me, Stevens. If I had my way, you'd be in the bottom of the lake," growled Dave. "Look here! I'm going in behind the light-house point, where it's sheltered, and I'll put you ashore in the yawl. Are you able to walk in from there?"

"I'll get in all right, I guess. It aint far," answered Stevens.

"Well, I don't want no guessing about it," snapped the skipper. "The wedding's to-night and I want you to be there in plenty of time. I suppose they've got the cakes all ready now, and the tables all set. Dora's getting her finery on. Gad, but I reckon she looks handsome! I'd like to see her. The preacher's probably there by now and all the folks. The fiddler's waiting for the dancing to start. They're all on hand but you. If you can't walk it, say so now, and I'll take you up the bay in spite of them all!"

"I'll make it all right, Dave," Stevens declared.

"And look here, Stevens," added the skipper. "Not a word of this to Dora! Hear! Don't mention my name!"

"It'll be as you say, Dave," agreed Stevens. "But she ought to know, what you've done for her and for me."

"No—No!" shouted the skipper.

The *Rambler* swung easily into the smooth water behind the point and Doran rowed Stevens ashore in the yawl. At the long wharf down the bay, the fishing fleet lay, storm-bound in a forest of spars; in the dusky light the skipper could see the tug from the mainland snugly moored in safety, but ever watchful, with steam still up, prepared to keep him an exile from Paradise. The hard look was in his face and the glint was in his eyes. Stevens waved him farewell as he landed on the sand but the skipper did not return the salute. Until Doran returned with the yawl, the skipper's sullen gaze followed Stevens as he hurried along the sandy beach toward the village.

Dave Conners did not know that Paradise was even then torn with anxiety over the safety of Bob Stevens and his schooner. He could not know that even then women were trying to comfort the little blue-eyed girl in the white house on the hill with the assurance that her lover had a good staunch schooner under him, and was perhaps in shelter or running before the gale. The light-keeper, and Captain Tom Martin and the folks at the big white house had seen the little schooner drop in behind the point, but when they learned her mission, she was hull down on the stormy horizon, flying before the gale, and her white sails were tiny patches against the sky.

On board of the *Rambler*, Dave still held the wheel and Doran stood beside him. As Paradise faded from view, Dave mumbled a sentence.

"What's that you said, Dave?" asked Doran.

"Oh, get below and go to the devil!" snapped the skipper. And Doran slipped silently down the companionway, leaving the ship and the sea and the last glimpse of Paradise to Dave Conners.



The Strange Cases of Dr. Wycherley

By MAX RITTENBERG



YOUR MIND is where you live; and it is because Dr. Wycherley so well understood this fact that he was able to accomplish such amazing feats. Yet do not imagine that his work was concerned merely with visionary matters: on the contrary, his "cases" have always to do with exciting events, stirring scenes and dramatic conflicts. This clever tale is the first of the series which will describe Wycherley's astonishing exploits.

No. I—THE MAN WHO LIVED AGAIN

WHY not?" quietly remarked the man at the other side of the table. His voice was smooth, even, cultured, and with a peculiarly soothing quality in it. Voices tell character as nothing else does.

"Of course it's impossible," answered Sir Miles Chenieston dreamily. Then he pulled himself together with a start, for the man at the opposite side of the restaurant table was a complete stranger to him. They had not exchanged a word previously. The stranger's remark had fitted in so completely with his "brown study" that his answer had been given quite involuntarily.

Sir Miles looked at him coldly and murmured the conventional: "I'm afraid I have not the pleasure—"

"Nor I," said the stranger. "But it would be a pity to let stupid convention prevent us from being of service to one another. My name is Wycherley, Dr. Xavier Wycherley." He passed over a card. "You were saying that you wished you could only have your life to live over again."

"I said nothing, to the best of my belief. Certainly my thoughts were running in that direction."

"Very much the same thing."

Chenieston stared at him.

"Now you are wondering whether I am a madman, or merely some kind of trickster new to you. Outwardly, I appear to be respectable, and yet—now it is on the tip of your tongue to tell me that I am damned intrusive." He spoke quite quietly, with an undercurrent of gentle irony. Curiously enough, while his eyes were keenly fixed on the baronet, his left hand was engaged in drawing again and again on a wine-list, minute portraits of him, marvelously delicate and accurate. Dr. Wycherley had the faculty of being able to do two things perfectly at the same time.

Chenieston's sense of humor came to his rescue, and he smiled broadly. "I admit it. I feel that convention would expect me to apologize, but I'm not going to do so. It is a damned intrusion, and you know it. Still, let's pass that. You interest me. My name's Chenieston." He took a card from his waistcoat-pocket.

Dr. Wycherley glanced at the proffered card.

"There are not many things that interest you nowadays, Sir Miles. The gaming-table"—he waved his hand in the direction of the neighboring room, packed with fevered humanity crowding over the green field of the goddess

Chance—"the gaming-table has no attraction for you, your liquor has lost its savor, your excellent cigar has gone out from want of attention."

Chenieston looked at it, and then threw it over the balcony into the palm-gardens below them. "Go on," he said.

"And, as you were saying, you wished you had your life to live over again. The world bores you. There are no surprises left. You have tasted everything. There is nothing left to do. It is satiety. "No," added quickly, "I have not been making inquiries about you beforehand—that passing impression of yours is a mistake, though a pardonable one. Believe me when I say that I have never seen you before this hour, nor did I know your name before you gave me your card."

"I believe you," answered Chenieston. The stranger's voice carried sincerity. "But I must really keep better control of my features. I *had* flattered myself that my thoughts didn't show on the surface."

"My training has lain in the direction of sensing what is below the surface."

"You are a London specialist, I take it?"

"I am a specialist," answered Dr. Wycherley, putting a shade of emphasis on the word, "but my name will not be found on the British Register, and my field is the world. I am here studying."

"Studying?"

"Men and women. Here at Monte Carlo they unmask. But, as I was saying a few minutes ago, why not live your life over again?"

"*Mephistopheles* is not roaming Monte Carlo," answered Chenieston. "And in any case I don't know that I would care to play *Faust*. The rôle had its drawbacks."

"The drawbacks were due to *Mephistopheles'* ideas of a *quid pro quo*, were they not?"

"I have been frank with you," said Chenieston brusquely, "and I would like you to be equally frank with me. In plain words, what are you driving at?"

Dr. Wycherley looked out over the black, velvety Mediterranean before answering, sipping his coffee slowly. Then he turned on Chenieston a pair of

dark, penetrating eyes, and answered with quiet emphasis, making the simple phrase carry a world of meaning: "I can give you what you desire."

The baronet looked back at him with suspicion in his eyes.

"It's not possible—I don't know you—"

"It *is* possible," was the stranger's deliberate answer. "Quite possible. I can give you your life to live over again,—if you will—but I am not forcing my gifts upon you. One day, perhaps, you may care to come to me. You have my address on the card. I will now bid you good-evening."

He rose and bowed courteously in a half-foreign way. Sir Miles returned his "good-evening," in non-committal fashion. He followed the doctor with his eyes as he threaded his way through the crowded gaming-room.

What did it mean, thought Chenieston. Of course there was some trickery underlying it. He felt hurriedly for his pocket-book. It was there intact, and he mentally apologized. The man was a gentleman beyond doubt. Suppose it were really possible to—No; the idea was impossibly fantastic—ridiculous!

But the idea was not to be dismissed so lightly. When Dr. Wycherley planted his mental seeds, it was with the skill and experience of a master gardener. All through the winter and ensuing spring the idea started up unbidden into Chenieston's consciousness when he was apparently thinking of other matters. During the summer, he fought against the growing obsession—tore up Dr. Wycherley's card, made himself busy with outdoor sports, even tried to interest himself in photography.

His attempt was a failure. The strange doctor had placed a mental finger "on the spot," and his finger pressed upon it ceaselessly. Sir Miles was indeed bored by the world—satiated at forty-five. He had title, money, wide estates, health—to outward appearance a man to be envied. But he had no wife or child, brother or sister, and with his distant relatives he was out of sympathy. His short married life of many years ago had been a disastrous episode; for his young wife had quickly plunged

into the frivolities of a "smart set," against his wishes, until they had drifted further and further apart and love had turned to hatred.

Chenieston divorced her—for cause—settled a lump sum on her, and put her out of his life. Since then no other woman had made a niche in his heart. His happiness he would entrust to no other's keeping.

But happiness kept to oneself turns sour—like bread hoarded away. He had sought happiness in selfish pleasures, and found only satiety. He had made a wilderness and called it happiness.

At the end of the summer he was shooting—wearily, mechanically, without pleasure—on his Scottish grouse-moor. His house-party included a married couple, the Burtons, whose evident happiness in one another made him bitter. In the gunroom one evening Burton became confidential concerning his wife. Said he:

"The little woman had a bad time of it a year ago; thought I was going to lose her. Nothing organic, you know—mental worry—the loss of our child. Doctors could do nothing. Then we came across an extraordinary fellow—I believe he's got Italian blood in him; anyhow, he made my wife a new woman. Lives in a queer little island on an Italian lake—Isola Salvatore it's called—"

"Name Wycherley?" asked Chenieston. That had been the solitary address on the doctor's card—Isola Salvatore, and nothing further.

"Yes. By the way, we never mention the child. It belongs to the past. My wife has forgotten."

"Forgotten!" It sounded incredible. "Completely."

October on Lake Rovellasco is the picked month of the year. Even Chenieston, satiated with the glories of the world, felt stirred by the quiet beauty of the scene as he looked out from the window of his hotel by the lakeside. Rovellasco is not yet a tourist center. Presently, perhaps, we shall see blatantly advertised: "A Week in Rosy Rovellasco for Five Guineas!" and then good-by to the quiet scene that Sir Miles gazed on.

At the far end, where the mountains crowd down upon the lake and take it to their arms, was a solitary islet deeply wooded. From amongst the trees peeped out a white glimpse of a villa. Chenieston's eyes came back to that white spot again and again. Finally he seemed to arrive at a decision, for he entered his room and started to pack his portmanteau. He was traveling without his man.

He had the bag carried down to the lakeside, and hailed a boatman in halting Italian:

"I want you to row me to Isola Salvatore."

The boatman shrank a little and crossed himself hurriedly.

"I do not like to," he answered. "No one likes to. He sends a boat ashore himself for his visitors. Perhaps if the *signore* will wait—"

Chenieston unwrapped a couple of five-lire notes from a roll and showed them silently.

The boatman hesitated; his feelings were plainly torn between fear and greed.

Chenieston took out some further loose change from his trouser-pocket.

"If I do, *signore*, you will not ask me to set foot on the island?"

"Very well," answered Chenieston curtly, and seated himself in the boat. He felt a natural disgust at the boatman's fear, but at the same time a feeling of something uncanny came down upon his own mind like a mist slowly driving over the hills. This man Wycherley must have queer powers. After a while the baronet endeavored to draw the boatman into conversation, but whenever the questions came round to the subject of Isola Salvatore and its owner, the man evaded them or affected to misunderstand.

As they drew near the islet the boatman suddenly crossed himself and muttered an invocation for heavenly protection.

"What is it?" asked Chenieston sharply. He strongly objected to all this mystery.

"Look, *Signore*! See for yourself!" The man pointed tremblingly to a small dark object tearing through the water around the island.

"It is a dog—that is all," answered

Cheniaston. "Why all this fuss about a dog? Certainly it is swimming faster than any dog I have ever seen in the water."

"He is not natural, *signore!* Look, as he approaches, at his eyes!"

The dog tore towards them, but as though unconscious of their presence. The boatman hurriedly rowed out of its way. As it passed, Cheniaston noted with something of a shock that only the whites of its eyes were to be seen, although the eyelids were full open.

"You see, *signore*—he is a hound of hell!"

"Get on," said Cheniaston brusquely.

As they approached a small landing-stage on the islet a servant came to meet them. He was clearly foreign, but spoke English quite adequately:

"My master bids you welcome, Sir Miles. He expects you, but is unfortunately called away at the moment. He asks you to excuse him until this evening."

Cheniaston exhibited no surprise at his name being known to the servant. It would be easily accounted for by some means of communication between the hotel and Isola Salvatore, he thought. He followed the man to the room assigned to him, a room furnished with great simplicity, but equal taste. Its characteristic, as well as the characteristic of the whole house, was restfulness—the atmosphere breathed peace.

Until dinner Cheniaston wandered about the garden of the house—a garden of botanical wonders. The ends of the earth seemed to have been ransacked for strange trees and plants with which to clothe the isle—camphor-trees, pepper-trees, palm trees, trees of strange spices; cedars of Lebanon and deodars from the Himalayas and cryptomerias from the Far East; pines from the Rockies and eucalypti from New Zealand; wonderful vines and creepers everywhere. It was a veritable isle of spices; it breathed of peace and forgetfulness. Cheniaston felt strangely soothed in spirit.

After dinner, simple but in perfect gastronomic taste, the baronet took his cigar to a seat under a giant magnolia, looking out over the dark lake and the

snowpeaks to the North. He fell into a reverie from which he was roused by suddenly finding Dr. Wycherley smoking beside him in silence.

"Excuse my not coming to welcome you before," said the doctor. "I had to go off to Japan last night—a patient of mine."

"I hope you had a pleasant trip," answered Cheniaston conventionally. Then he became aware of the extraordinary statement made by the doctor, and added hurriedly: "I thought, for the moment, you said Japan."

"Yes; that is what I said—of course, I did not mean in body."

"You seem to have made a curious reputation for yourself in these parts," said Cheniaston, abruptly.

The doctor smiled, and answered with mild irony:

"I treated some of the peasants 'round here—'cast out devils,' and so forth. They were very undecided whether to class me as an archangel or a lieutenant of Lucifer's; finally they settled on the latter."

"Your dog—"

"Ah! yes—you met Rolf taking his four o'clock constitutional. I should explain that he has a perfect horror of the water in the ordinary way. When he was a puppy somebody tried to drown him, and I came to his rescue—nothing will induce him to go into the water now."

"He looked as if he were swimming in his sleep—it was very queer."

"Precisely. Post-hypnotic suggestion—ordered somnambulism, if you prefer it. It is good for his health to take a daily swim. It suggests undeveloped possibilities in everyday life, does it not—draught horses, mules, elephants and so on? You take my meaning?"

With his left hand Dr. Wycherley was making delicate experiments with the almost human leaves of a "sensitive mimosa," though all the time his eyes were fixed on his guest.

Cheniaston drew himself together sharply and began:

"That was not quite what I came to see you about."

"There is no need for you to go into a detailed explanation. I sensed that when you arrived at the lakeside yes—

terday. You want to hear more—to continue our Monte Carlo conversation. Especially you want to know just precisely what I can offer you, and, to put it bluntly, what my terms are.”

“There seems no need for me to hold up my side of the conversation.”

Dr. Wycherley smiled again.

“Not just at present. This is of course elementary and quite preliminary. Later on, should you wish to try the experiment, I shall ask you to talk for days at a time. To begin with, what are my terms for giving you your life over again? Not money, for of that I have ample for my simple needs. Not influence or power, for that I can build for myself. No; my demands are less material.” He paused.

“Well, what can I give you?”

“Data.”

“I don’t follow you.”

“Scientific data—material for my life-work, psychological research. I should ask you to report progress. To bring, say twice a year, the book of your life for my inspection. *I want to know what a man would do with his second life.*”

“There are devilish possibilities in that,” answered Chenieston, setting his teeth.

“Precisely. If I don’t inspire you with confidence, you would be an utterly weak fool to trust yourself in my hands for an instant. If I were a poor man, the temptation might be irresistible; if I were a criminal man, the consequences might be horrible; if I were an enemy of society, the consequences might be appalling. It is for you, a man of the world, to make up your mind what sort of a man I am. On the one hand you have the evidence of the peasants around here; on the other hand—”

“I met the Burtons,” interrupted Chenieston.

“That was a very simple case—like the amputation of a finger to a surgeon. Your case, I would warn you frankly, would be more in the nature of a major internal operation. Have you the courage?”

“Explain to me what you would do.”

Dr. Wycherley then threw away his cigaret.

“Let us get at fundamentals—let me

show you the psychological basis of happiness. Happiness is just contentment—neither riches nor power can of themselves give a man happiness. Happiness comes from within. The world laughs at the millionaire who says that he wishes he were poor and obscure, but *he* speaks from bitter experience. He has bought dearly the knowledge I now place before you. Happiness is just contentment, and contentment is illusion. Contentment sees the good and ignores the evil. Contentment forgets. Contentment makes every day a new age, a wonderful experience opening out vistas of a rose-strewn future. *You* live in the past; every new experience as it arises is stale to you because you mentally compare it with the past. You have seen everything, tasted everything, done everything. Your experience is a daily curse to you.

“Now suppose you could *forget* all that had happened to you from twenty-one to—shall we say forty-five? The world would be a new place to you; your life would be before and not behind you. You would be a young man in mind again.”

“But not in body.”

“No; one cannot altogether put back the development of the body. But ‘a man is as young as he feels’ is an old saying, and a very true one. I know boys of fifty—I expect you know some also. The mind reacts on the body.”

“To have a blank page from twenty-one to forty-five would hold its disadvantages,” said Sir Miles thoughtfully.

“Precisely. Therein lies the difficulty of the operation. One has to cut out only what is deleterious. It is like removing a great cancerous growth from the body. One must use the scalpel very warily. It is not an operation for the raw medical student. You place your mental life in the hands of the trained surgeon—if you have faith in him. That is why I said a little while ago that I should ask you to talk for days at a time. Your past life would have to be laid bare to me, and to my judgment you would confide the decision of what should be cut out and what left in place. There is the matter in a nutshell.”

“You propose to hack at my mind, my Ego, my individuality?”

"There you betray an ignorance of psychology. You confuse several distinct issues. I cannot touch your Ego or higher self—we call it the 'consciousness.' I can only operate on your lower self, the 'sub-consciousness,' the warden of your memories. In the hypnotic state we converse and treat only with the patient's sub-consciousness."

"Then where does the higher self go to?"

"Where does it go to in sleep? I ask you in return. But let me lend you a scientific book to-night which will put the matter before you in detail."

"Thanks," said Chenieston. "I will read it. To-morrow I will give you my decision."

In after days the month that Chenieston spent on Isola Salvatore seemed to him like a hazy dreamland. He remembered vaguely that Dr. Wycherley had placed him at evenfall of the second day under the great magnolia, stretched out in a gloriously easy chair, and had suspended in front of and above him an imprisoned firefly. On this he had to concentrate his gaze until tired eyelids closed down over tired eyes. Meanwhile the doctor was talking to him—quietly, smoothly, soothingly. Sleep had stolen upon him—restful, heavenly sleep.

He had no direct knowledge of what had happened to him in sleep, but Dr. Wycherley had told him that he was then talking *en rapport* with his sub-consciousness for hours at a time, bringing out his past life, ordering forgetfulness of this, allowing remembrance of that.

The month was to Chenieston at once an eternity and a moment.

In the intervals between the hypnotic trances he had written and signed long documents for the instruction of his lawyers, his bankers and his stewards, directing the disposal of his estates amongst his distant relatives and various charities, should he not return again to his world. He was to give out that he had gone to a vague somewhere to shoot big game—a handy excuse—and he was to start life afresh under a new name and with a few thousands capital only. He was to be one of the world's workers.

He began to grow a beard to change his outward identity, and Dr. Wycherley spent long hours training up within him a new voice while in the hypnotic state. Change the voice, and you make a man unrecognizable to his friends.

When Stephen Carruthers—this was the name agreed upon—left Isola Salvatore he staggered mentally as a man staggers bodily when he leaves the nursing-home. His past life was mainly a blank to him, though certain memories remained which Dr. Wycherley had judged advisable. There were sudden gaps in his memory stitched together and working unsmoothly, as the muscles work unsmoothly where the surgeon has used the knife. Queer flashes of unconnected incidents came upon him every now and then, dazzling him. He felt horribly helpless.

The doctor accompanied him to land and stayed with him for months while they roamed the Continent together. Gradually Carruthers began to feel his feet—to speak metaphorically—and a great happiness surged upon him. Everything was new, fresh, unexplored. The Riviera had before seemed to him a pleasure-city painted like the cheeks and lips of a painted woman—a horrible, rouged outrage upon Nature; now he saw the good and not the evil, and it was fresh to him and very pleasant to his eyes. The blood within him danced and sparkled like champagne. He thought and spoke as a youngster fresh from college.

Carruthers was a new man.

At the age of forty-five—to outward appearance—a man cannot very well study for and enter one of the close professions. The few oldish men who do walk the hospitals or eat dinners at the Temple are regarded by the world with good-natured, rather contemptuous pity. Carruthers, finding himself in possession of a few thousand pounds only, insufficient to live on idly but offering possibilities for earning an income, chose to enter business, which has no age-barrier.

He returned to London. As far as his memory went, he had not seen it since he was a boy of twenty-one or so, and to his eyes great changes had taken

place. They struck him sharply like a blow in the face delivered in the dark—at first he was confused and deafened.

Queer flashes of sub-conscious memory stirred him to actions which were meaningless to his understanding. One day, for instance, he found himself walking mechanically up the steps of a mansion in Berkeley Square and ringing the bell. A butler appeared and asked him his business. Suddenly—to his painful confusion—Carruthers discovered that he had no business there, had no reason to be walking up those steps and ringing that bell. He pulled himself together and, for the sake of saying something, asked if the master of the house were in. The butler, looking at him suspiciously as some one of dubious intentions, replied that Sir Miles Chenies-ton was abroad, and edged him down the steps again. The name seemed somehow familiar to Carruthers, but he could not place the connection. It was one of many worrying episodes.

With part of his money he bought a share in a small publishing firm, and in the interest of the work the scars in his memory smoothed out of conscious thought. The semi-professional aspect of the publishing business appealed to his natural instincts, and since his partner—Bailey by name—was easy to get on with, the work gave him keen pleasure. "Office hours" meant nothing to him; often he would stay on at Booksellers' Row long after the clerks had left and the neighboring offices were cold and dark, and the gray ghosts of little old caretakers came out of their daylight hiding-places to dust and sweep. He was keen to build up the business into a large organization.

"How young you are!" said Bailey to him one day, half chaffingly, half enviously. "I declare you make me feel like an old fogey."

"I *am* young," answered Carruthers. "Why shouldn't I be? Everything is so new and fresh—life rushes into one full tide. Isn't it the same with you?"

"I wish I knew your secret."

"What secret?" Carruthers felt, for a brief fraction of a second, a queer mental confusion that was like a sudden stab of pain. "I haven't got secrets, my dear fellow."

"I only meant the secret of your perpetual youth," his partner hastened to explain. The subject dropped.

Twice a year, spring and autumn, Carruthers took a holiday from work and journeyed to the islet on Lake Rovellasco in unconscious fulfillment of his contract with Dr. Wycherley. Some force within him impelled him to steep himself in the waters of peace, to feel the garden of spices close around him and take him to itself in an ecstasy of joy unutterable. He yielded himself to the soothing passes of the psychologist—all unconscious, he laid bare his soul to the gaze of Dr. Wycherley, who studied him as the biologist studies the growth of some strange new organism.

In his waking intervals Carruthers fished, bathed, rowed about the lake. He made great friends with Rolf, who, barring only the bath, was ready to accompany him anywhere. Rolf was a big, shaggy-haired English sheep-dog, born for friendship.

It was on one of these lake excursions that Helen Mannering came into Carruthers' life. The occasion was pure chance—one of those sudden squalls that occasionally sweep down in fury on Lake Rovellasco from the snow-peaks and toss the waters as a farmer pitchforks the hay. She was alone in a light skiff with a local boatman, who unexpectedly lost his oar, and losing his nerve with it, implored help from above.

Carruthers, not far off, saw the danger and rowed hard to help, Rolf barking eagerly on the front seat. Nothing could have been worse for the boatman's peace of mind. Abandoning the other oar, he groveled on the floor of the boat, while the waves slapped in angrily.

"Can you catch a rope?" shouted Carruthers.

Mrs. Mannering pluckily climbed over the prostrate boatman to the front of the skiff, caught the rope not unskillfully, and tied it to a ring. With the skiff in tow, Carruthers faced the wind and kept head to waves for an hour or more until the squall died away and the sun came out to smooth down the waters.

It was natural for Carruthers to call at her hotel the next day to make polite inquiries. But it was more than mere politeness that took him—he had felt

strangely attracted towards this woman no longer young, no longer beautiful, and occupying the position of a paid nurse to a testy old gentleman with half a dozen imaginary ailments. Something stronger than himself made him linger beyond the time of a conventional call—made him row over to land next day, and the day after, contrive to meet Helen Mannering on the water-front where the tourist shops display their allurements and all the little world of Rovellasco saunters.

He even suffered gladly the querulous egoism of Colonel Padgett so that he might be near Mrs. Mannering. Dr. Wycherley, to whom nothing was hidden, spoke to him in gentle sympathy one evening when Carruthers sat musing under his favorite magnolia-tree.

"A woman in a thousand," said the doctor.

"In a million," answered Carruthers.

There was silence, a silence of mutual understanding.

"Why not?" asked the doctor. His sensitive left hand was rapidly drawing tiny portraits—perfect miniatures—of Mrs. Mannering on a scrap of paper.

"Yes; why not?" echoed Carruthers. "It's a dog's life for her. I could make her ideally happy. There is sympathy between us beyond anything I have ever felt. You believe in the idea of one's affinity, doctor?"

"I do not know," returned Dr. Wycherley gravely and slowly. "As a scientist, I say that I do not know. One feels that it is true, but there is no evidence. If there is only one affinity for each of us in all this wide world, what are the chances of meeting? Infinitesimal. No; there is no evidence. It is one of my problems."

So Carruthers took courage in hand, and contrived his opportunity. He spoke deeply and passionately, breathing fast:

"Colonel Padgett tells me that you are moving soon. I mustn't wait, I mustn't let this opportunity slip by. Helen, since the world began, we were made for one another—every fiber in me tells me that it is true. I am full-tide with happiness, but it must be shared, and with you only can I share it. I cannot give you wealth or position, but I can give you all that is best in myself. Will you take me as I

am? Look me in the eyes, and read my love."

He caught at her hands. She drew them away and, to his astonishment, began to weep softly but as though her heart were broken.

"I can't; I can't!" she answered. "Don't you see or feel? Has love made you blind?"

"But I don't understand. Do you mean that you are tied—that you have a husband alive? I understood that your husband was dead. Or is your love given elsewhere?"

"No, no!"

"Be frank with me, Helen. Be fair to me. Have I been too impetuous; am I selfish in pressing my love upon you before your answering love has had time to grow?"

She looked out upon the witchery of night on lake and mountain, as though to seek inspiration or courage from them, and when at length she turned to him again, her voice was firm with resolve:

"What you have said has done me honor. Don't think that I rate lightly what you have offered me. But you are not yourself—this is a moment of madness. Were I to accept, it might mean a lifetime's misery—for both of us. Look me in the eyes, look at me well!"

Carruthers looked, puzzled, confessed himself at sea:

"I don't understand. I only see what is very beautiful to me and what I hold very dear. My love, I see you for what you are, and with that, a lifetime would hold no regrets."

"Give me until to-morrow," said Helen suddenly. Joyfully he acquiesced, and in the moonlight saw her back to her hotel.

"In the morning I come for my answer," he murmured as he said good-night.

But in the morning he found only Colonel Padgett, raging fussily and repetitiously:

"By gad, sir, it's outrageous, positively outrageous! Runs away without saying a word—leaves me to shift for myself! Don't you realize, sir, that she was paid, *paid* to look after me? How am I to go for my morning walk? This will

make me seriously ill! I'm feeling damnable twinges already; I never heard of anything so heartless in all my born days. It's outrageous, sir, positively outrageous! I'll put the police on her track! Leaves me a note to say that she has to run away—gives no reason—gives no address. I'll report her to the nursing agency; I'll have her cashiered! I never heard of anything so disgraceful in all my born days!"

"Did Mrs. Mannering leave any note for me?" interrupted Carruthers.

"How do I know? D'you think I've had any time to—"

But Carruthers had made off to the hotel bureau, where the cashier handed him an envelope, which he tore open eagerly. It contained only a little bag of dried herbs and a brief note:

All night I have wrestled with temptation, Miles. I have fought and conquered; I will not spoil your life again. This little bag of herbs will explain everything to you. "Rosemary for remembrance." Good-by!

HELEN.

He put the bag—*her* bag—to his lips, and in his brain there was as it were a snapping and rending of the stitches that bound up the wounded memory. He had known that little bag of dried herbs before. But where—where? In Heaven's name, where? He felt the question was driving him mad—the torture was unbearable. At the railway-station he found she had taken ticket for Milan. There was no train in that direction till the afternoon. At Milan she would be lost—might take train again to anywhere. What could he do?

Then the soothing shadow of the psychologist came over the glare in his mind, and he rowed feverishly back to Isola Salvatore. Dr. Wycherley's eyes lighted up with the enthusiasm of the scientist as Carruthers explained and showed him the letter.

"Splendid! Splendid!" said the doctor. "Your experience is the first direct evidence of the affinity theory, that, so far as my knowledge goes, has ever been obtained. This is well worth the trouble of the experiment!" Then he added, with his gentle, ironic touch: "The zeal of the scientist—it forgets the patient! Excuse me, Carruthers, for my scientific

selfishness. Be quite easy in mind—I will surely find her for you. If you let me put you to sleep, it will soothe the brain."

"But how can you find Helen? She has deliberately run away. She will cover up her tracks."

"The bag of herbs," answered the doctor. "It is very personal to her. It is charged with her personality. Rolf!"

The big, shaggy-haired dog trotted up to him, wagging its tail.

"Sleep!" commanded Dr. Wycherley, sharply.

Instantly the dog rolled over on its side, inert.

"His suggestibility is very highly developed," explained the doctor, while with his left hand he made rapid little sketches of Rolf in a half-dozen different attitudes. "Nowadays a mere command will send him into deep hypnosis. It took me a long, long while to train him. At one time I nearly gave it up in despair; then I hit on a new way to— But this will not interest you. I will just say briefly that in hypnosis proper, the hyperæsthesia of the senses is of the order five to ten in men and women—that is, their sense perceptions become five to ten times keener than in the normal working state. This is a matter of everyday knowledge. But what is not generally known is the effect in the case of animals. I have found most astonishing magnification of the senses. With Rolf, the hyperæsthesia in hypnosis is of the order twenty-fold and more. I will take him to Milan and start him on the trail. He will succeed. Watch."

He put the bag of herbs to Rolf's nose, and the dog at once jumped up and began with closed eyes uncannily to nose the garden for a trail.

"Stop!" commanded the doctor, and the dog obediently stood still, rigid.

"Now let me put you to sleep," suggested Dr. Wycherley gently, and Carruthers acquiesced.

When Carruthers woke again, he found Helen by his side, watching him in silence. He held out his arms.

"You are back again. Thank God!"

"Wait!" said Helen. "Let me explain. Don't you really know me, Miles? Dr. Wycherley tells me you have forgotten."

"Miles! Why do you call me Miles?"

"I was your wife. I was very young and very foolish. If only you had been a little more patient! Or I more controlled! It was a very little thing that caused the first breach between us. You remember the night I wanted to go to the Hilary ball—what an age ago it seems—and you—"

"I don't remember anything like that. Surely you are imagining—"

"You divorced me."

"How could I? I only met you on the lake—"

"You gave me a sum of money for my maintenance, but a few years after I was tricked out of it by a Continental swindler. I was forced to turn to and earn my living, and I took up nursing as a profession. Naturally I changed my name. When I met you here at Rovellasco, I didn't recognize you at first—you have changed so, Miles—but eventually the little mannerisms, the little tricks of speech told me it was you. That

night on the terrace you used the same words as when—"

"But I don't remember! What does it all matter?"

"You divorced me," she answered slowly, "and you had cause."

"But I don't remember. Can't you see, Helen, that I don't *want* to remember? Some one told me some time that to forget is to be happy. He was right. I want only you, Helen, you as you are to-day, as I feel and know you are. What has the girl you speak of to do with the woman I love to-day? *She* belongs to the past—you belong to the present and the future—"

"We have to live with our past, Miles."

"A horrible creed! A devilish creed! Let the dead past moulder with its dead! Say, rather, we have to live with our future. That is *my* creed—will you make it *yours*, Helen?"

Helen bent down and kissed him on the forehead.

In the Way He Should Go

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

MRS. GOULD took off the cover of the kitchen stove and prodded the fire with a poker.

"I need some kindlin's to help this fire along," she announced. "I wisht you'd cut me some."

Captain Seth Gould glanced across the breakfast table at his step-son, a loose-jointed, anemic-looking young man, who was just scraping the sugar out of his coffee-cup.

"Stevie," said the captain sharply, "did you hear what your ma' just said? She wants some kindlin's. You go out and cut her some."

"I didn't mean him," said Mrs. Gould quickly, while Stevie Drew scowled at

the captain. "I meant *you*, Seth. Stevie hadn't oughter be cuttin' kindlin's; you know he aint strong—"

"He's strong enough to hang around the barber shop and play pool every day and every night till ten or eleven," he grunted. "Who's cut the wood while I've been at sea?" he asked with a quick suspicion.

"I have," said Mrs. Gould. "I didn't want Stevie—"

Again her husband interrupted her irritably.

"You aint goin' to cut no more," he said with finality, "and I don't believe I am, neither—not while there's a feller like him hangin' round the house and

eatin' the victuals I pay for. Stevie, you go and cut them kindlin's. Move now! Don't set there sulkin' like that—you hear? You can't pull the wool over my eyes same's you do over your mother's. If you can find strength to play as much pool as you do, I guess likely you can find enough to hack up a few of them limbs out by the block."

Stevie, with another angry glance across the table at his step-father, got slowly to his feet and shuffled out.

Mrs. Gould turned from the stove with a spark of fire in her eyes.

"You're too hard on Stevie," she said. "He always was delicate and he aint none too well even now."

"So I guessed from his appetite," said the captain grimly. "I'll risk Stevie after the breakfast he just put away. A little trainin' of the right kind is what he needs."

He reached for his pipe on the shelf, filled it and sauntered out the back way.

From the wood-pile behind the shed came a sound of faint and infrequent blows of the axe, which told that Stevie was in no immediate danger of over-exerting himself.

Captain Gould stepped into the shed. The low window in the far end commanded an excellent view of the wood-pile beyond. Once he had reached the window and glanced out, the captain gave vent to a whole-souled grunt of disgust.

Seated in a low chair before the chopping block—a rocking chair with a cushion in it—Stevie languidly picked out the smallest limbs in the pile and yet more languidly wielded the axe on them. Anon he paused to take deep inhalations from the cigaret which he had laid with great care upon a stone close by.

"Holy, sufferin' mackerel!" the captain exploded. "If that aint just about the limit, what is?"

As if in answer to his question came the patter of footsteps about the corner of the shed, and Mrs. Gould, an old shawl thrown over her head, came into view.

"I never meant for you to cut them kindlin's, Stevie," she said. "Your pa, he don't understand about you. You run along into the house. I'll finish 'em."

Stevie, with no show of hesitancy whatever, surrendered the axe to his mother and arose from the chair. Picking up his cigaret, he sauntered towards the house, with never so much as a backward glance.

From his point of vantage in the shed window, the captain felt his blood begin to boil.

"How'm I ever goin' to make anything out of him so long as she pampers him like that?" he grumbled to himself.

Softly he tiptoed out of the shed; stealthily he made his way around the house to the road, down which he strode towards the harbor, his wrath and disgust waxing momentarily greater.

"I can't do nothin' while his ma's around," he muttered to himself as he went. "The only way to do is to git him away from her and then learn him a thing or two, and that's just what I'm goin' to do."

The captain made his angry way down the elm-lined road to Stoneport's little harbor, with its cluster of rotting old wharves. On the string-piece of one of these the captain espied a round-shouldered, gray-headed man, who dangled his feet above the water the while he watched a lumber schooner beating up the channel.

"Hi, Jonas," the captain greeted him. "Aint sold that sloop of yours yet, have you?"

"Mornin', cap'n," the other replied. "No, she's still on the market."

"How much?"

The man on the stringer named a figure, at which the captain nodded.

"You git me a couple of trawls and some bait and change that cutter of the sloop's for a serviceable dory, and the money'll be in your hands," said Gould.

The other man glanced at him with narrowing eyes.

"What you buyin' of her for?" he demanded. "Thought you said when you got back here last month that you was done with the sea; that you'd made your pile and was goin' to take some comfort from now on."

"Well, can't a man take comfort doin' a little fishin' if he feels inclined that way?" was the captain's noncommittal rejoinder. "What say—goin' to git the trawls and the dory?"

"Sure thing."

"All right. I'll have the check down to you after dinner. Clean her up a little and have her at the end of the wharf here, ready for me to put some provisions on her this afternoon, will you?"

Jonas, still looking doubtfully at the other, nodded, and the captain strode down the wharf and made his way to the railroad station. Here, drawn up to the platform, was Stoneport's one dilapidated hack, and on the box, Jim Bruce smoked drowsily while he awaited the arrival of the morning train.

"What'll you charge, Jim," said the captain, "to take a passenger—two, in fact—from the barber-shop down to Gray's wharf to-night?"

"What time they goin', cap'n?"

"I dunno exactly. Say sometime 'long about ten or eleven."

Jim rubbed his chin. "Oh, say about a dollar," he announced.

"All right," said the captain. He fished in his pocket and drew out the dollar and also an extra one.

"Here's two for you, Jim," said he. "You have the hack waitin' under the trees there by the waterin' trough just above the barber shop at ten to-night. One of the passengers is maybe goin' to make a little fuss. If he does, can I count on you to lend a hand with him if you're needed?"

"You sure can," said Jim, pocketing the money and laying aside his pipe, for the morning train was whistling at the bend.

Grinning sardonically to himself, the captain turned his steps homeward. It being as yet too early for pool, Stevie Drew lounged on the back steps smoking the inevitable cigaret.

At ten o'clock that evening, Captain Gould, standing in the gloom of the elms by the watering trough, heard up the road a clank and rumble and clatter of loose spokes, which told him his equipage was approaching. A moment later it drew up beside the captain and Jim Bruce slid from the box.

"Mum's the word, Jim," the captain cautioned. "He's likely to be along here any time. S'pose you've guessed who the other passenger is."

"Dunno's I have," Bruce whispered.

"It's that cussed boy of my wife's—

that Stevie Drew," the captain hissed, not without some heat. "Too blamed lazy most to draw his breath, he is, and to make it wuss, his mother upholds him in it. Sticks to it he aint well and is pindlin'."

There was a chuckle from Bruce. "Sho! What yer goin' to do with him, cap'n?" he asked.

"Take him for a little cruise," the other replied. "I've bought the old *Jessie* off'n Jonas Dodd and this afternoon I've grubbed her for a month. Me and Stevie is goin' to take a little fishin' trip in her, and I cal'late he'll be some more like a man when we gits back."

"Thunder and lightnin'," said the delighted Bruce. "What'll Mis' Gould say, s'spose?"

"I dunno, and in a way I don't care," said the captain. "She's sp'iled him and I'm goin' to try my hand at unsp'ilin' him. Here," he reached into his pocket and handed the other man an envelope, "I want you to give her this note after you've took us to the wharf. It tells her that me and Stevie will most likely be gone for a month and not to worry."

Footsteps sounded on the gravel sidewalk. The captain swung about and peered sharply in the direction of the barber-shop.

"Sh-h!" he cautioned. "Here he comes now. Git onto your box, Jim, and be ready. Soon's I git him in, drive for all you're wuth to the wharf."

Jim mounted the driver's seat, and the captain, every muscle tense, stepped close to the sheltering trunk of one of the elms, a position which brought him close to the sidewalk and at the same time effectually concealed him.

Serenely smoking a cigaret and greatly pleased with the thirteen consecutive games of one-ball he had just won, Stevie Drew approached the watering trough, blissfully unconscious of the ambuscade laid for him beneath the elms.

Just as he had made out the dim shape of the village hack and was about to pass the time of day with the driver, some one collided with Stevie with a shock which all but took him from his feet. His cigaret was jammed half-way down his throat; before he could utter a sound to voice his amazement

and his fright, steel-like fingers had gripped his throat, he was tossed unceremoniously in and the voice of his step-father, trained in competition with many a gale, was bellowing the order to be off.

Away went the hack, while from within arose the sound of strife, grunts, half-smothered oaths and the sound of rending fabric.

Valiantly Jim Bruce plied the whip and soon they had reached the wharf.

Scarcely had the hack come to a standstill, when the door burst open and two figures floundered out and rolled about the rough planking. That Stevie's blood was up there could not be the slightest doubt. He kicked and bit and tore and clawed, while the captain, who was rapidly getting the upper hand of the *melée*, strove to force him to the string-piece and thence to the sloop's deck.

There was nothing very delicate about Stevie at that moment. Indeed, it took the combined efforts of Jim and the captain to hustle him onto the sloop's deck, and it was only after the most valiant sort of a defense that he was finally shot down the companionway into the cabin.

Captain Gould closed and padlocked the hatch, from beneath which came howls and yells, a great kicking and thumping and the sound of smashing glass, as Stevie rushed about in a vain effort to find some means of escape.

"Did you notice anything very pindlin' about him?" the captain asked grimly, as he sopped the blood from his nose with his handkerchief.

"Two dollars was dirt cheap for that job," grunted Bruce as he spat out a tooth and climbed wearily to the wharf.

No sooner had the hack gone complainingly up the wharf than Captain Gould had cast off his lines, hoisted sail, and headed the sloop down the bay.

There was a good breeze blowing and outside he knew it would be rough; but rough weather was what he was looking for in this particular case, and he smiled grimly to himself when, as they rounded Crowsnest Point, the sloop began to jump about in lively fashion.

Presently, the sounds in the cabin having ceased, the captain unlocked and slid back the hatch.

"Come up!" he bellowed.

Stevie came. He came with a suddenness and a vigor that was rather unlooked for and disconcerting. Captain Gould was forced to let go the wheel, and while the wallowing sloop came into the wind, he and Stevie, locked close together, smashed and bumped about the deck and several times all but went overboard.

But a short arm blow from the captain's fist finally ended it, and while Stevie lay gasping by the rail, the captain proceeded to enlighten him.

"I'm captain of this craft, and you're the crew. You want to get that through your silly noodle right off," he panted. "I'm goin' to make half a man of you if I have to break your blamed neck and every other bone in your body doin' it. You step lively and do as I say and we wont have no trouble—understand? Now, git for'ard and flatten down all them sheets."

By way of adding emphasis to his command he shot a kick at Stevie, but the latter eluded it, and apparently most acquiescent in spirit at last, started forward. Gould could dimly see him at work on the sheets.

Then, as they struck the open sea, it became rougher. Sea after sea came swooping over the sloop's low bows. And presently a regular mountain of water struck them with a shock that fairly made the little craft stagger.

Looking ahead, Gould could see no sign of Stevie. He threw a bight of line over the wheel and ran forward. It certainly hadn't been enough of a sea to wash a live man overboard, and that Stevie, living all his days in Stoneport, would not know how to look out for himself under such conditions was highly improbable. Still, Stevie was not on deck, and the captain had the grace to feel a trifle nervous.

"Gone into the fo'castle or the galley, most likely," he told himself, striving to calm his fears, but a search of both revealed no trace of the missing man.

Captain Gould leaned against the creaking mast, stunned and shaken.

"Gone!" he muttered. "Don't that

beat time! Little sea like that took him off!"

Then with quickened pulses and an odd contraction at his throat, he leaped to the wheel and spun it hard down.

Back and forth he cruised, shouting Stevie's name until he was hoarse. But no answering cry, strain his ears as he would, came from the tumbling waters.

"Oh, geel!" groaned the captain. "Aint I done a nice piece of work! Kidnaped him and lost him like this. I can't never face Mary again, not with him gone. Lord, I daresn't go back and face her after this! If he's lost I gotter be lost, too."

For a long time he stood there dumbly at the wheel, his mind a prey to conflicting emotions.

"Aint this the devil!" he groaned at last. "Here I've gone and lost him, and now I can't go back. I darsn't. Just got my pile made and goin' to take some comfort—and run up against *this*! Not money enough with me to live on a month, neither. All I can do is sink this sloop, and go to sea again. Let 'em think if he was lost, we both was! I wouldn't darst have it otherwise with him gone."

Captain Gould spent a fearful night of it. When the first gray streaks of dawn were whitening the east he ran well in towards Cape Clay, scuttled the sloop and swam ashore. Then he walked to the nearest railroad station and took the morning train for Boston.

To all intents and purposes he was lost at sea, and a man who is lost at sea can't very well hit up his old friends and cronies for a job. Gould took a little room on Hanover Street, and made round after round of the shipping in the harbor. But there was no opening for him. Day times he haunted the water-front. At night he strove to bring himself to write a confession to Mary, but every draft he made of the much desired letter, proved unsatisfactory and was torn up as soon as it was written.

So three weeks passed and his slender funds were getting dangerously low, and naturally a dead man, or a man who has decided to be one, can't send home for money, nor can he touch his friends as he might do under happier circumstances. And although the captain tried here there and everywhere, even seek-

ing the dingy coasting schooners, no berth could he find.

Wearily he was trudging past T wharf one morning, when the forest of masts beside it gave him an inspiration.

"At least I can go fishing," he told himself. "There'll be room for me somewhere on one of 'em."

And with this in mind he poked through the gate and down the wharf. But the first schooner he hailed had a full quota of men; so did the second and the third and the fourth.

Near the end of the wharf lay a seiner, evidently just in, for barrels of mackerel were being whirled rapidly out of her hold. A solitary figure was on the deck—a lanky, stoop-shouldered man in a faded blue sweater. Him the captain hailed half-heartedly, intending to ask for a chance to fish with her.

"I say, mate," the captain was hailing the other, when the blue-sweatered figure turned.

Captain Gould staggered back and all but fell into a tub of fish. In another moment he was scrambling to the seiner's deck, where he proceeded to embrace the lanky individual with choking cries of "Stevie, Stevie!"

"Why, how're ye, cap'n, how're ye!" said the lanky one coolly wriggling himself loose from the captain's bear-like hugs and fending off other ones which seemed imminent. "Where'd you drop from?"

"Where'd *I* drop from?" fairly howled the captain in his exuberance. "Where'd *you*? I thought you was lost overboard. I thought you was drowned, and I dar'sn't go back without you. I scuttled the sloop and sunk her and swum ashore and come here lookin' for somethin' to do. I wanted your ma' and folks to think if you was dead that I was, too. How in time did yer git here? How did it happen?"

Stevie, with a grin at the captain's twisting face, calmly seated himself on the rail and drew out a cigaret.

"I was some mad that night," said he, "and when we was off Knob Light, I made up my mind I'd get away from you whether or no. So I took a hatch cover and lit out. Thought maybe, even in that sea, I could make Knob Point. But I hadn't counted on the tide. It

took me the other way. And by good luck it bumped me plumb against the can buoy on Knob Reef. I got my fingers into the rungs of that little iron ladder that runs up its side and hauled myself up, and there I sat, wobblin' round on that blamed old buoy till nine next mornin', when these fellers come along in the seiner and took me off. They was short of men and I been mackerelin' with 'em. Say it's an all right job, too."

"Why hadn't you let me know you warnt drowned—" the captain began, but Stevie waved him to silence.

"We just got in this mornin'," said he, "and anyways I guess I should 'a' let you worry for a spell, after that other night, you know."

"Well, you're safe and that's the main thing," said Gould, catching Stevie in another bear-like embrace when that gentleman was off his guard. "We can go home now. Home, Stevie!

Why, darn it all, I never expected to see it again. I never thought I should dars't go back. And me with my pile made and all ready to take it easy ashore. Just come on home with me on the first train that'll git us there. You can play pool from mornin' till night for all I care, and you needn't never do one blamed stroke of work. You can lay on them back steps and smoke cigarets till doomsday if you're a mind to and what's more I'll buy all you can smoke. Just seein' you alive is all I ask."

Stevie grinned again. "Oh, I'll go home with you for a night or so," he said, "but nix on the stayin' there. There's good money in this. Why, my lay foots up to over a hundred and fifty this trip, and bein' onto the ropes now, I'll git a better lay next time and hereafter. I guess it's all right, cap'n. You started out to do that job on me, but these here roosters on the seiner have finished it for ye."

A Matter For Diplomats

By GUY C. BAKER

ALTHOUGH Watts was once more back in Washington, his stay was intended strictly to be transient. The papers were full of his speedy solution of the Continental Trust Company muddle up at Philadelphia, from whence he had just returned.

As he sat in the Shoreham lobby awaiting the time of departure of his train, he was startled out of his complacent reverie by the mention of his name.

"Pardon me, but you are Mr. Watts, I believe."

Glancing up in surprise, he beheld a dignified gentleman standing before him, whose military carriage, gray-streaked hair and mustache, and strong

face, gave him that striking aspect that commands your notice even in the jumble of the crowd.

Watts arose and silently extended his hand, his face mirroring his unexpressed inquiry and bewilderment.

"The clerk pointed you out," explained the stranger. "I am G. W. Mowbray. May I have a moment of your time?"

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Mowbray. You are not Colonel Mowbray—father of the young man who—"

The other interrupted gravely. "Yes—it is of that I wish to speak."

"Why—er—you see—" began Watts, floundering for words sufficiently emphatic to convey the futility of discuss-

ing that point. Then, chancing to glance into Colonel Mowbray's face, he saw something there that stopped him short—two tears were slowly coursing down the pale, care-furrowed cheeks of the old man.

All the gold certificates in the treasury could not have induced him to leave after that. He gulped hard as he gently took the Colonel's arm.

"Why certainly, Colonel, certainly! Let us find a quiet corner over yonder by the window."

As the two men—so strikingly dissimilar in appearance—silently crossed over to the designated place, there flashed to Watts the remembrance of those glaring head-lines in the papers of the day before. He recalled the account of the strange death of the young Roy Mowbray during the preceding night. At about two o'clock in the morning the young man had been found by a policeman out on 16th Street, in an unconscious, dying condition. An ugly bullet wound in the back told the story. He died at the hospital a few hours later without having regained consciousness.

Watts also recalled that mention had been made that Colonel Mowbray and his son had lived together; that both had held important positions—positions of a strictly confidential nature to the government—in the War and Navy Departments. The Colonel had been there for years; and at the end of his collegiate course, the boy had been designated as sort of an assistant to the father. The papers had also commented on the fact that the blow was doubly hard upon the father from the fact that the Colonel had been on the eve of retiring, but that, being in very moderate circumstances, he would now be unable to do this.

All these things ran through the mind of the frail-looking, blue-eyed detective as the two men located themselves over in the corner.

The Colonel controlled his feelings with difficulty as he finally said—

"I presume that you have read what the papers contained regarding my great trouble?"

"Yes—and you have my sympathy, Colonel Mowbray. It must be a great shock to you."

The old man appeared not to have heard Watts' expression of commiseration. He continued gravely. "The papers did not tell everything."

Watts sat up with new interest. "Ah, is that so?"

Mowbray's voice trembled. "If it were only a matter of my boy's death—ah, Mr. Watts, that—that I believe I could bear. But it is more, how much more no one but myself and the government officials know!" Then, leaning forward, he added in a cautious whisper—"And the government officials don't dare tell!"

Watts started to give expression to his surprise, but, catching himself, he drew a cigar from his pocket, put it in his mouth without lighting it, folded his arms, crossed his legs limply, and lay back in his chair.

The Colonel continued, his voice low and guarded as though he spoke of things that should not be told. "Night before last my son left our apartments with the avowed intention of spending the evening with Katharine Van Ess—a very intimate friend.

"That same night, at about one o'clock, a watchman of the War Department, in passing along the corridor upon which my office is located, noticed that the door to my office was ajar. Approaching to learn the cause of such an unusual occurrence, the guard was suddenly knocked to the floor by the violence with which a masked man suddenly bolted out of the room.

"The trespasser—carrying a large portfolio under his arm—nimblely eluded the effort of the guard to seize him, and was rapidly disappearing down the corridor when the guard drew a pistol and fired.

"While the shot did not stop the flying man, the trail of blood that led to the window through which he escaped, attested that he had been hit.

"At two o'clock—an hour later—as you know, my son was found with a bullet wound in his back." For a moment the gray-haired man paused as he drew a handkerchief across his forehead with trembling hands; then, moistening his lips, he added in a voice vibrant with sorrow—"That is the—the thing the papers did not have."

It was partly his honest conviction

and partly his desire to comfort the unhappy father that prompted Watts to say— "But the two affairs are merely coincident. Their connection is by no means conclusive or even convincing."

Mowbray shook his head hopelessly. "I had not finished. In his hurry to escape, the—the thief left a bunch of keys in the door—they belonged to my son."

The two men sat silent for a moment. Then Watts leaned forward as he inquired with a world of tenderness in his voice. "And what is there that I can do in the matter?"

"I can scarcely explain. The blow is so stunning—the whole thing so incomprehensible—that I hardly know what I do want. However, the circumstances are so overwhelming that—that I will not allow myself to be deceived—it must have been Roy. But what I cannot understand is what prompted him to do it—what was his motive. That is what I want to know, Mr. Watts."

"But why distress yourself by agitating matters, Colonel? It is all over, whatever may have been the motive. Why not let the matter rest?"

For a moment the Colonel stared at Watts incredulously. Then, his eyes burning with a strange fire, he burst out—"Let it rest! Why, man, surely you are not serious! I am an old man. The boy was all that I had. Ours is an old Virginian family with an irreproachable war record. Never has there been a stain on our family honor. I dare not—in justice to our traditions—let it rest. It must be either vindication or else the world must know it in all its blackness."

"Then there is another side to it." Once more his voice quavered tremulously. "The Department has intimated that, under the circumstances, it would probably be best for me to resign—they no longer trust the father!"

Watts was chewing his unlighted cigar savagely. "Demmit, that's too—too drastic!"

"Yes, and yet, Mr. Watts, no doubt but what it is justifiable. You see the portfolio that was stolen contained complete plans for the new system of harbor defenses. The theft of these plans is a calamity to the government. The retention of a person in a position

so important upon whom the least suspicion attaches would be preposterous."

"Has this portfolio been recovered?"

"No—it has disappeared. That feature of the case would indicate that others besides my son were implicated."

An hour later Watts had modestly hurled his lance into the treacherous arena of an international intrigue, the like of which the powers at Washington had not been called upon to wrestle with for many a day. But the pale, sharp-featured "outsider" with the guileless eyes left to the secret-service men the worriment of the government—he merely represented a broken-hearted old man.

That afternoon Watts called at a stately home on 16th Street that was well known in Washington for the many social functions that had occurred there and for the social prominence of its fair owner.

He was shown into a room elegantly furnished in delicate Louis XV furniture in rose and gilt. The mellowed light that sifted through the curtained windows gently illumined the paneled rose-satin walls. An undefinable atmosphere of refinement prevailed the room that subtly captivated one with its charm.

The portières parted and a young woman quietly entered, holding Watts' card in her hand. She bowed simply and gravely regarded the caller out of large dark eyes as she said:

"You are Mr. Watts?"

"I am. Have I the honor of addressing Miss Van Ess?"

"Miss Van Ess is ill—too ill to see anyone to-day. I am her private secretary—probably I could serve you."

Watts thought for a moment before replying.

"Well—yes, I suppose that you can give me the information that I seek. I wished to speak to Miss Van Ess about the Mowbray affair."

The fair secretary raised her eyebrows ever so slightly. "Oh, yes—isn't that terrible! We could scarcely credit the account of it—so dreadful and—and tragic! It was the shock that is responsible for Miss Van Ess' indisposition—she is simply prostrated. Have they suc-

ceeded in tracing the person who—who killed him? And are you a reporter, or detective or—”

Watts smiled as he broke in.

“I am simply a friend of Colonel Mowbray, and merely making a quiet investigation for his satisfaction.”

Watts imagined that he detected a fleeting look of relief flash across the mobile face of the young woman as she said:

“Oh! I see. Well, I can give you in a few words all the information that Miss Van Ess could furnish. Mr. Mowbray came at about nine o'clock in the evening and left at eleven. He departed in the best of spirits and stated that he intended going directly home. That is all that we can tell you about the matter.”

Watts left. He had learned exactly what he had counted on hearing, yet for some reason, he was disappointed. From there he went directly to the coroner's, where he had arranged to attend the autopsy as the representative of Colonel Mowbray.

The physicians having charge of the post-mortem gave slight heed to the whimsical-looking, unprepossessing man who stood by watching the proceeding with pale-blue eyes that seemingly were a-dream.

Once the coroner straightened up exultantly—they had found the bullet. It was eagerly examined and proved to be of the same caliber as that used by the guard. The announcement of the fact did not seem to disturb the serenity of Watts in the least.

When the physicians drew to one side in a guarded consultation as to the finding, Watts eagerly embraced the opportunity to make a critical examination on his own account. When he had finished and once more stepped aside there shone in his face a new light—a light of elation and happiness. And though a few minutes later the coroner confidently announced that (although for State reasons the verdict must remain secret for a time) the finding would be that Roy Mowbray had met his death from a bullet wound at the hands of a guard in the War Department, that same light illumined the face of Watts as he smilingly passed out onto the street.

Watts next sought out the policeman

who had found young Mowbray that night. The policeman stated that he had passed the same spot where the unfortunate young man was found, thirty minutes before and that the wounded man was not there then.

He now made haste to find Sparrow, of the secret-service. Watts had worked hand in hand with Sparrow in New York where the interest of his client coincided with that of the government. It was there that the two men had formed mutual-admiration *bund*.

From this astute government agent, the bizarre unriddler from the west learned many things regarding Katharine Van Ess. Among them, that she was one of the cleverest women in Washington; that somehow she seemed to wield a powerful influence over members of Congress and members of the diplomatic corps, that she was a globe-trotter, and resided in the courts of foreign countries as much as her own.

He learned further that her strange prestige with prominent personages conferred on her a sort of social leadership among the Washington smart-set and that her home was a social, political, and diplomatic rendezvous. Her cleverness and the prodigality with which she threw open her doors to *attachés* of the embassies had impelled government officials to become just a trifle mistrustful, and to watch her accordingly. The beautiful Katharine was, however, basely misjudged or else too crafty for the government agents.

Sparrow also confided that Miss Van Ess never lacked for suitors, and that her favor never remained anchored for any great period with any of her devotees. For several months her attentions had been divided between young Mowbray and Ito Katsuma—an *attaché* of the Japanese legation.

An hour later Watts was back at the morgue giving directions to the grumbling coroner—whom he had brought unwillingly with him. In thirty minutes more they left—on the thin, pale face of the one a smile of grim satisfaction, on the heavy, sluggish face of the other, a look of surprise and gravity.

It was four o'clock when Watts was admitted into the office of the Assistant Secretary of War. The Assistant Sec-

retary was very busy; besides it was quitting time, and quitting time is quitting time in this city of worshipers at the shrine of civil service.

"What can I do for you—er"—glancing at the card he held—"Mr. Watts."

"I called in relation to the Mowbray matter."

The A. S. raised his eyebrows expressively. "And how are you interested in the Mowbray affair?"

"I have been looking into it at the instance of Colonel Mowbray."

"Ah, I see, I see. Too bad for the old fellow, too bad. Decidedly rough to be dropped at his age. But the good of the service, of course, demands it."

Watts leaned forward.

"Why?"

"Why?" echoed the other with sharp incredulity. "Why because the confidential nature of the working of this department requires the employment of men of unquestioned integrity. And when it is in the blood, you know, it will finally out. The Mowbray weakness has cropped out in the son, and—"

"Your judgment is rather unequivocal considering that your conclusion is based upon circumstantial evidence, is it not?"

"Circumstantial—yes. But good heavens, what more convincing—"

Watts pointed a long, bony finger at the Assistant Secretary as he interrupted sharply.

"Roy Mowbray did not steal that portfolio of plans—he was not near this building on the night of the theft!"

For a moment the official stared at Watts stupidly; then, an ironical smile curling his lip, he asked:

"How, then, did he happen to be carrying that bullet around in his anatomy that was fired by the guard out here in this very corridor?"

"The bullet that killed Mowbray was not fired by the guard!"

The Assistant Secretary smiled his unbounded scepticism as he inquired with an air of indulgence:

"Whom, then, was it that the guard paid his respects to? And how do you explain, my dear sir, the presence of Mowbray's bunch of keys hanging in the door?"

"I am not prepared to answer your

last two questions—but I will know this evening. And that brings me to the object of my call. I have unraveled all the questions involved save the one just mentioned by you—that, I intend doing to-night. And that revelation will be of such importance to this department, that I consider it highly essential that you be present."

"You are making much ado about nothing. Your theory is all tommy rot. I do not believe that it is worth the while for us to prolong this interview."

Watts arose abruptly, his eyes flashing, his jaw-muscles twitching, and, stepping over close to the surprised official, jerked out—

"Very well! I have warned you. To-night I intend uncovering a little international intrigue that, in justice to Colonel Mowbray, I will give out to the world through to-morrow's press. And when that happens, the United States will be facing war with a world-power! Good afternoon."

The Assistant Secretary was on his feet.

"But—er—Mr. Watts—wait a minute!"

Watts waited—and when he left he was accompanied by the Assistant Secretary of War.

An hour later the two men—accompanied by Colonel Mowbray—were shown into that ultra-elegant room of subdued tones, familiar to Watts. Again the demure lady with the diffident eyes noiselessly pushed aside the curtains and stood surveying the callers with a look of inquiry. As before, she finally came graciously forward and courteously bowed as she said:

"I am sorry, but I fear Miss Van Ess will be unable to see you—she is still quite ill."

Watts stepped forward, and, his voice low and determined, said:

"We regret to be—insistent—under the circumstances, but Miss Van Ess must see us—in person and at once."

The young lady elevated her eyebrows but remained silent.

"Besides," continued Watts confidently, "we know that Miss Van Ess is able to see us—that she is *not* ill."

The young lady continued silent, but her eyebrows contracted in a frown and

a hostile light flared up in her dark eyes.

Watts continued indomitably. "And you might tell her further that we are just one hour ahead of the secret-service men—that it is to her advantage to see us first. And—well, that it all. Now please lose no time in telling her."

The young lady stood for a moment in hesitation. Then turning abruptly, she left the room without a word.

Watts turned smilingly toward his companions. Colonel Mowbray glanced from one to the other in bewilderment. The Assistant Secretary of War shook his head gravely.

"That was pretty strong, Mr. Watts—do not forget the position of the lady in whose house we are. Her friends are persons of national prominence—remember that."

Watts had just time to mutter "How could I forget it," when there was a swish of skirts and a tall, strikingly beautiful woman swept haughtily into the room. For a moment she stood gazing imperiously from one to another of the men, her head held high in manifest challenge. Then, like golden sunshine breaking through the rifts of clouds, a captivating smile—a smile before which Senators had capitulated—softened her face as she crossed over and extended a white, shapely hand to the secretary.

"Why, this is a surprise—I did not know that you were one of my callers." Then, her face quickly sobering, she turned to Colonel Mowbray. "Mr. Mowbray, words are meaningless in a great sorrow like yours—I think we both understand. My hesitancy in coming down was—well, I feared that it would but make it harder for you."

Touching a handkerchief to her eyes she stood in impressive silence for a moment; then, with stately bearing, she turned and addressed the frail-looking, blue-eyed man in an aggrieved tone.

"My secretary tells me that you are a friend of Colonel Mowbray—as such you are of course welcome in my house. I think, however, that I am entitled to an explanation as to the extraordinary message you sent me a moment ago."

Watts smiled, and in that inimitably gracious way he had, answered softly.

"Why, certainly you are entitled to

that, Miss Van Ess; certainly. The fact of the matter is, that the investigation of the Mowbray matter has taken an—*an* ugly turn, and it is essential that you divulge some things peculiarly within your knowledge in order to relieve yourself of some—*er*—embarrassment.

"What—!" exclaimed the lady in amazement.

"Yes—you. But first let me tell you what *we* know, then I will tell you what *you* know. We know that there was a clever conspiracy concocted to secure certain important government documents from the Army department; that young Mowbray was first 'felt out' to see whether they could not be procured through him, but that his integrity could not be shaken.

"Thereupon, while the young man was spending the evening with friends, he was given wine—wine that was drugged. After he had become helpless, one of the conspirators took from him his keys, went to the War Department, admitted himself, seized the coveted plans, and was making his escape when the guard surprised and wounded him.

"His wound was not sufficient to prevent his escaping and returning to the starting place. Then it was that he discovered that he had made a blunder—he had left the keys! That was a disaster. He had intended returning them to young Mowbray's pocket, and when Mowbray emerged from his stupor the young government clerk would have been none the wiser. But now, those keys would involve Mowbray, and he in turn would divulge the real malefactor.

"This unforeseen *contretemps*, therefore, demanded prompt and extreme measures. The conspirators were playing for big stakes and nothing—not even life—must frustrate them now that success was within reach. Fate had intervened to cast suspicion upon Mowbray in the matter of the keys—why not make his guilt an incontrovertible fact?

"Accordingly, with cool deliberation, they shot Mowbray in the back for the double purpose of forever silencing his tongue, and to weld a final link in the chain of circumstantial evidence against him. The body was thereupon carried out and left along the sidewalk."

The Assistant Secretary and Colonel

Mowbray sat listening to the startling recital in speechless amazement. Miss Van Ess, motionless and silent, sat staring at the bizarre Westerner with rapidly changing emotions. One moment, cheeks a-flush, her lips slightly apart, her eyes wide with surprise, her face reflected her wonder; the next instant her cheeks would pale, her lips shut tightly and the venomous glint that burned in her eyes bespoke her defiance.

At this point, her voice remarkably low and even, she interrupted.

"What you tell sounds like a figment of imagination. But grant it all true—why do you distress me with a recital of these miserable details?"

Watts arose, thoughtfully crossed to the window and back again, paused in front of the fair lady, and said calmly—Carson would have said "too calmly"—

"Why? Do you insist upon an answer to that? Very well. I tell you these 'miserable details' because the wine that Roy Mowbray drank which rendered him helpless was *your* wine. Because the *rendezvous* for the conspirators on that night was *your* house. Because the identity of the person who procured those plans and shot young Mowbray is what *you know* regarding this affair!"

Pale and trembling, her fists clenched and eyes blazing, Katharine Van Ess sprang to her feet, and, approaching closely to Watts, retorted:

"That—that is a lie!"

The placidity of the blue-eyed man remained unshaken.

"Calm yourself, Miss Van Ess. We know that you never intended the matter should go the extreme length that circumstances made necessary. We know that you were not the principal. But we also are positive that you do know who that person is—that is established from the fact that Mowbray was in your house until some time between 1:30 and 2:00 o'clock A. M.—notwithstanding the statement of your secretary that he left at eleven."

"You see, the policeman who patrols this block is positive that the young man was not lying along the sidewalk when

he passed that spot thirty minutes before. No shot was fired there in the street because the same patrolman would have heard it. The victim did not walk there himself after being shot, because the bullet that wounded him severed the spinal-cord, instantly paralyzing the lower part of his body. From that instant he was physically helpless. That was the second blunder—the thing that first proved to us that it was not Mowbray whom the guard had shot, and that he must necessarily have been shot here. A second post-mortem disclosed the drugged wine—the rest was merely a matter of school-boy deduction. Now Ito Katsuma—"

With a startled cry, the look of haughty defiance faded from the woman's face, leaving there consternation and fear. Open-mouthed, wide-eyed, she whispered hoarsely—"Then—then you know!" Swaying weakly for a moment, her hands clutching, she sank noiselessly to the floor.

As a frightened maid and several servants hurriedly appeared in response to the summons from Watts, the three men quietly withdrew.

Pausing for a moment as they reached the sidewalk, Colonel Mowbray suddenly grasped the hand of Watts, and, his voice tremulous, his eyes tear-filled, exclaimed:

"You have saved my boy's name from dishonor. How can I ever repay—how—how—" He could say no more.

Watts swallowed hard as he gently replied:

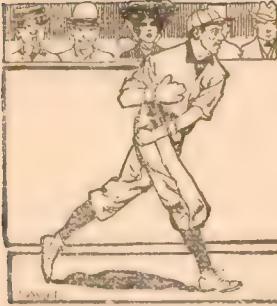
"Oh, that's all right, Colonel, that's all right. I am fully paid when I see your gratitude."

The Assistant Secretary of War at this moment broke in, his face a study in amazement.

"This is all incredible—simply surpassing belief. Publicity of the truth will shake the civilized world. What shall we do about it?"

Watts smiled.

"That, sir, is now a matter for diplomats. My humble part in the play is ended."



Through the Season with the Gray Sox

By BRUCE FARSON



THE POWER of young blood is the theme of this second of the Gray Sox chronicles. This narrative of a new recruit's experiences and exploits is not only intensely interesting but is also so true to life that many readers will doubtless identify the characters of the story with players well known to fame.

No. II—YOUTH WILL TELL

THE big league season was a month old and the Gray Sox were in second place. At the top of the heap, roosted the Pigeons; but their leadership caused no great worry.

"They're 'morning glories!' Watch 'em come back to us about June," grinned manager MacArthur when he was questioned.

The Pigeons were not a first-class ball team and their present exalted position was merely due to the fact that they had met with more good training weather than their rivals. Even now, the settled sunshine of May was beginning to have its effect and the Leopards, league champions of the year before, were climbing up in the percentage column by leaps and bounds.

Since opening day, the Gray Sox had performed on their home grounds and MacArthur had been studying his new material. Half a dozen of the recruits had already been "farmed out" to the minor leagues for another year of seasoning; half a dozen more were slated to go in the near future. There was really only one youngster who laid claim to the manager's attention. This was Tom Shannon, who aspired to play "first base."

From the first, Tom had shown symptoms of being that *rara avis*, a grand

ball player. MacArthur had fallen into the habit of allowing him to work a few minutes each day with the regular infield during preliminary practice, and he had proven popular with the "fans." This was mainly due to the fact that Lee Carnahan, the regular guardian of the initial sack, was the least spectacular player on the team. He took throws, high, low, or on either side of him with the minimum of effort necessary for accomplishment. Many a spectator wondered, while watching Lee play, why he had not taken up baseball himself. During the seven seasons that he had been a fixture, he had merely been taken for granted.

To the players, however, Carnahan appeared in a different light. He was a mainstay to them. Honest and steady and even-tempered, he never grew excited when a losing streak was in progress or "errors" were piling up. More than one new pitcher had glanced at his calm, half quizzical expression in a crisis and then struck out the man at bat.

Shannon was Carnahan's antithesis. He was lithe, with a panther-like agility. His face was lean and clear-cut. His hair showed black and glossy under his cap. He had a way of playing far off the bag, then coming in at full speed and spearing the throw with his gloved hand.

Ordinarily, this would have struck MacArthur and the others as being a bit "grand-standing;" but the deadly accuracy with which Shannon performed the play and the amount of ground it enabled him to cover, precluded that surmise. By the time the team had completed its home engagement and was ready for its first swing around the circuit, every man was aware of two things. One was that Carnahan was not as good as usual and the other, that young Shannon gave promise of being a "phenom." Now, a "phenom" is not altogether popular among ball players because his rise invariably marks the decline of some stalwart with whom they have fought shoulder to shoulder through good and bad seasons. Consequently, Shannon gradually became cognizant of a studied indifference in place of the careless good nature that he had grown accustomed to. The boy was a "fighting Irishman," however, and he met these rebuffs by drawing into his shell and devoting himself strictly to baseball.

So it was, that as the club's Pullman clicked over the rail-ends on the first stage of the Eastern invasion, the new first baseman was the object of the low-voiced discussion that was progressing in the wash-room. In a haze of tobacco smoke, half a dozen players lolled on the leather seats. Ed Wells was talking.

"I've seen these 'boy wonders' before. They look great in practice; but they sort of fade away under fire!" He turned to Summers for confirmation and the catcher nodded.

"They generally start huntin' for a handle on the ball when a man's stealin' home, or else they fire it 'way over a felluh's head." He growled and looked sharply at MacArthur, who sat quietly by the window staring out into the night. Mac knew, and they knew he knew, that every speech was an effort to draw him out.

"Happy Jack" Edwards tried it next.

"O' course Lee Carnahan's a valuable man to any team. Even if he wasn't any great shakes at hitting or fielding, he certainly does steady down an infield."

"Yes, an' he's only havin' a little slump now. He'll be all right in a month," contributed Danny Alden.

Suddenly MacArthur turned from the window. He gazed at them steadily for a moment. They all leaned forward expectantly. At last, they had drawn him out.

"Well, boys—" he began, then paused. "Yes?" prompted Edwards.

"I guess I'll go to bed," he finished, and smiling blandly, rose.

They sat silently, while he drew aside the curtain that screened the wash-room from the corridor. When he was gone, Edwards spoke first.

"Oh, thunder," he snorted. "Let's play some ten cent limit!"

Behind the dingy berth hangings, at least two men wooed sleep in vain. In a "lower," as befitted a regular, Carnahan threshed about and swore under his breath. It was two weeks since he had known the dreamless slumber that should follow a strenuous afternoon on the "diamond." His skull seemed thronged by a myriad of little demons whose impish voices wore his nerves to paper thinness.

"You know you're going back! You can't play good enough ball to stay on first!" "What made you drop that easy grounder yesterday? It was right in your hands!" "What made you strike out, when even a long fly meant a run?" So they chorused.

In disgust, he held himself rigid and laboriously counted barmecide sheep leaping over an imaginary stile; but when the five hundredth had hurdled successfully, he was broader awake than ever. In spite of himself his thoughts continuously reverted to baseball and what the other players called his little slump. He knew that it was not a slump at all. It was simply the beginning of the end. For a week he had been throwing low to third base and it was only through Wentworth's ability to handle the ball cleverly that he had not made glaring "errors." At first, he had almost convinced himself that this was due to a temporary aberration of his judgment of distance; but in his heart, he knew that he was making no over-throws. They were all too short.

Religiously, he had massaged his "pegging arm" in an effort to drive out the soreness that wasn't there. He realized that he had acquired a tardiness in

fielding. He met the ball squarely and set himself in time; but somehow he failed to "scoop 'em" quite quick enough. Grounders had contracted a habit of bounding elusively off his finger tips. As yet, he was playing the bag with his old-time accuracy; but each time he stretched for a "wide one," he caught himself flinching from an imaginary muscular twinge.

As he lay cogitating and listening to the subdued night sounds of the swaying Pullman, he felt no animosity toward the youngster who was crowding him. There was only a numb despair and a vision of long, arid years of bachelorhood in some cheerless town where he must engage in some cheerless industry to keep body and soul together.

Across the aisle in an "upper," Tom Shannon was awake, too; but his thought ran through different channels. He burned with a hot resentment toward Carnahan, toward his team mates, and toward his ill-fortune in having been "drafted" to the Gray Sox.

"Don't they want a good ball team? Don't they want to win games?" he asked himself. "Then why in the world do they turn chilly toward me because I'm trying and succeeding?"

He conned his mind for some peg other than the most logical one on which to hang the garment of scant notice and short answers. He had been warned by certain ex-major league team-mates, not to be "fresh" and he had borne their advice in mind. He had not tried to "butt in." He had waited for an invitation and then had merely acted pleasant. Inevitably, he came back to his first conclusion.

"They're sore on me because I'm crowding this fellow Carnahan! Gee, that's a fine spirit!" he muttered. "How'd they break in, I'd like to know! The Gray Sox must have had a second baseman before Edwards was signed, and I guess Summers aint the only catcher. I'm out for the honor and the coin just as much as they are and I aint gom' to lay back and cover up because some old mutt with wooden legs and a glass arm is a nice fellow!"

A sense of injustice can do a great deal and for a long time, Shannon's heart burned with a fire that was not kindled

by indigestion; but nothing can keep Youth and Sleep apart forever, and eventually his eyelids grew heavy. The rumble of the onrushing train lulled him; the faint creak and click of shifting wood and metal became a drone; and he dozed off.

The Gray Sox rolled into Leopardville two hours late and the time was short before the players had lunched and repaired to the ball park.

In the 'bus, Shannon was silent, chiefly because he was not spoken to. Halfway to the grounds, Danny Alden on the seat with the driver, spied the wagon of a cooperage firm loaded with empty barrels and shouted his luck to the others.

"Say—I'll bat some to-day! Whole wagon load of nice new barrels! Whee!"

Shannon wanted to grin in appreciation, but stifled the desire.

They trotted out upon the field where the Leopards were already practicing, and tossed bat-bags and sweaters in front of their bench. Ed Wells and Bob Andrews began to "warm up" leisurely with Summers. Half a dozen infielders started a game of high-low. MacArthur squatted on the bench in close converse with Carnahan.

At length, the Leopards resigned the diamond in the Gray Sox's favor. Casey went into the pitcher's box to furnish batting practice and one after another of the squad stepped to the "plate" and banged away at his curves. Shannon tried savagely to bat the ball out of the lot every time it came his turn and kept the gray clad "subs" in the outfield scampering.

When the regulars took their positions for fielding practice, MacArthur directed him to bat to the outfield, and he was too busy at this to watch how Carnahan handled himself around first.

At the expiration of the time allotted each team for limbering up, the starting gong rang under the grandstand, and Shannon retired to the bench with the pitchers, second-string catchers, utility men, and such recruits as still hung on.

The throngs in the grandstands listened expectantly as the blue-clad umpire stalked out into view and raised his megaphone.

"Battrees! For the Leopards, Stall and Bowen! For the Gray Sox, Wells and Summers!"

A roar of approval greeted his announcement. Stall was the strongest pitcher on the Leopard staff and Wells had turned Leopardville joy into grief more times than one in games past. The selection gave promise of a battle royal. The umpire bent fussily over the plate and brushed it clean with his whisk broom. Collins, who led off for the local team, lounged forward and stood leaning on his bat. On the diamond, the Gray Sox fielders shifted about expectantly. Happy Jack Edwards picked a pebble out of the clay around his station and tossed it over back of third. "Nibs" Wentworth spit in his glove and rubbed it gently. The official straightened and adjusted his mask.

"Batter up!" he commanded, and the struggle was on.

As the game progressed, the fans saw their anticipations of a battle royal realized. The first four innings were marked on the scoreboard by double brackets of "goose eggs." One scratch hit had been garnered off Wells, while Stall had held the Gray Sox batters safe. The coaches back of first and third had relapsed into a vigilant silence. Both teams were playing errorless ball with the brilliance and finish of mid-season.

The fifth opened like its predecessors. Wells retired the Leopard batters in one, two, three order. Then the Gray Sox took their turn at bat, with Chuck Summers leading off. Summers was considered to be a good waiter and he confirmed his reputation now, by "smelling out the bad ones." He got Stall in trouble by getting three balls without a single strike; but the Leopard evened that up by forcing Chuck to knock two fouls in succession. He couldn't stand the strain, however, and the Gray Sox trotted to first on the next ball pitched, with the first pass of the game to his credit.

Instantaneously, the coaches woke to noisy life. They waved their arms, pounded on their gloves, shouted, and danced from one foot to the other. MacArthur followed Summers in the batting order and he strode up to the plate with determination in every movement. The

spectators had suddenly switched from calm enjoyment to vociferous pleading. A chorus of yells assailed Stall.

"Fan 'im, Bill!" "This guy can't hit! He never could!" "Make 'im hit into a double play!"

MacArthur, swinging his bat in a short, jerky arc, eyed the famous Bill calculatingly. He centered every atom of his brain power on trying to guess what the pitcher would serve him.

Abruptly, with a quickness inspired by momentary nervousness, Stall unwound his arms and threw. Like a flash Mac swung. The ball and bat collided with a cr-a-ack that stifled the "fans" like a choking grip about their larynxes. They made out a gray figure plunging over first and turning toward second. Ahead of him, they saw another sprinting toward third. Fascinated, they watched Collins, in left field, leap vainly into the air and then turn and run back toward the fence. The first runner was rounding third before he bent and fumbled in the grass. It seemed hours before he straightened and winged the ball frantically toward the diamond. Then they saw Summers plough across the plate in a cloud of dust and MacArthur halt at the third corner.

Stall settled after that and vindictively forced Davey to pop up a dinky fly and Edwards to dribble a weak grounder that retired him at first and "doubled up" MacArthur at the plate. However, the monotony of goose eggs on the scoreboard was now broken by a huge "1" that sapped the crowd's courage.

The sixth inning was a repetition of the first four; but the fanatics that ringed the diamond ushered in the seventh with acclaim. They stood up in their seats, whistling, roaring, stamping.

"The lucky seventh! The lucky seventh!" they bellowed.

The very volume of their noise put a few atoms more of spirit into the Leopards and made the Gray Sox appreciate a bit more fully that they were playing on a hostile field. Cal Morgan, the heaviest hitter in the League, was up and the bleachers greeted him with a shrill yell of encouragement. Ed Wells studied him slowly. Morgan was one of those exceptional batsmen that have no

weak point. He could hammer any sort of curve or freak ball with uniform success. If there had been men on bases, Wells would have issued him a pass, but, under the present circumstances, to do so would have been a patent admission of fear that few pitchers would have cared to make.

Summers, crouching behind Morgan's swinging club, signaled for a "high, fast one, close in" and big Ed nodded. With a short side-arm motion, he whipped the sphere toward the plate. Morgan poised on the balls of his feet, watching warily for it to break into a curve. It had covered two-thirds of the distance between the pitcher's box and the plate before he decided to swing at it. Then he sprang back a step and flailed away. If he had met it squarely, the ball would have gone to the fence, but he had timed his strike a trifle too slow and he barely chopped the upper half of it and knocked a fast grounder straight at Edwards. Happy Jack danced in three steps, bent forward, and scooped it; then he turned leisurely and slapped it on a line to Carnahan, waiting for it at "1st." The sphere struck Lee's glove and he closed his fingers on—air. He saw Edwards standing gaping at him. Then there was a flash of white-clad legs at his back and he stooped to pick up the ball from the dirt at his feet. His face was burning as he snapped it back to Wells.

"Right in my hands!" he muttered.

Morgan, dancing on and off the "bag," nudged him in the ribs.

"Thanks, Old Top!" There was a sarcastic note in his voice that galled. Lee's eyes burned and stung and he closed them for a minute. Abruptly, he heard somebody shout:

"Hey—Lee!"

His eyes flew open again. Right at him came the ball. He threw up his hands and at the same moment Morgan, sliding back to the bag, cannoned into his legs. He toppled, felt the ball carom off his shoulder, then fought desperately to untangle himself from the equally anxious Morgan. By the time he had scrambled to his feet Edwards was chasing toward the fence. Happy Jack picked up the ball just as the Leopard dug his spikes into second, and whipped it back to Carnahan. As he did so, Lee

heard a chorus of yells from the diamond at his back. Intuitively, he knew that Morgan had made a break for third. It seemed to him that the oncoming sphere floated stationary in the air. A small voice within him kept shrilling:

"You'll throw short! You'll throw short!"

He set his teeth in a resolve to fool the imp inside his skull. Then the ball slithered into his hands and he whirled. With every ounce of his hard muscles, he relayed to Nibs Wentworth, waiting with outstretched hands at the third bag. He saw Nibs straighten, leap upward frantically, then turn and leg it toward the stands. A cold sweat beaded his forehead as he realized that he had thrown the ball away. He did not hear the roars of laughter from the exuberant crowd as Morgan dashed over the plate with the tying run. He was blind and deaf to all except the crashing fall of the battlements of his baseball supremacy. Now he knew it! He was a has been! Slowly he left his station and walked toward the bench. He hung his head and fumbled clumsily over removing his glove. Casey, a veteran himself, who felt the ground of the pitching slab slipping from beneath his spikes, ran out to meet him.

"What's the matter, Lee? Sick?" he stammered. Carnahan merely shook his head, and continued toward the bench. His face under its coating of tan, was the color of ashes. Shannon sprang up as he approached. He had already shed his sweater. Carnahan looked at him.

"You'd better go in, Boy," he said huskily.

The youngster hesitated. He had never supposed it would be like this!

"I—I—" he stammered; but Casey gave him a push and MacArthur, halfway in from center field motioned peremptorily. Quickly, he trotted toward first base, slipping his fingers into his glove as he ran.

Wells threw the ball to the "bag" to meet him and he scooped it mechanically and snapped it back with an underhand whip. His heart was pounding out long, heavy, beats. His mouth was dry and dusty. The bedlam of the stands assailed his ears like the dull roar of breaking surf. His feet felt infinitely heavy as

he struggled out to his fielding position off the base. He saw the batter vaguely through a shimmering blur that reminded him of a heat haze or of tears.

The crack of a bat revived him and he saw Danny Alden leap sideways. Mechanically, he sprang for the bag. Alden drove the ball to him as if it were in a slot and he pulled his foot off the base before the runner thudded past him. The blur had lifted now. A hot fighting spirit, the old spirit, that had made him daz-zling in the minor leagues, had evaporated it.

"One gone!" he gritted. "We'll never let 'em put another run over!"

He eyed the batter malevolently and crouched on his tip-toes, but the Leopard slashed a high drive straight over third base and perched safe on second. The roar of the surf in his ears grew louder. The next batter chopped a high bounder that Alden stopped but could not hold, and there were runners on first and third and only one out.

Wells, on the slab, was still cool. He settled his cap a bit tighter, sifted a handful of dirt through his fingers and hitched up his belt. On the first ball he pitched, the man on first stole, confident that Summers would not risk a throw to second with a man on third. The batter struck wildly to further the effort. Wells spat, and slipped over a second strike, then wasted two balls in a vain effort to make him bite. With the score two and two on the batter, Big Ed tried a high in-curve. As a general thing, the man at the plate was weak on this sort of a ball, but this time he proved the rule by murdering it. Shoulder high and with the speed of a bullet, he drove a screamer just inside of first base. At sight of this seemingly clean hit, the crowd rose with a bellowing, raucous roar and delight—a roar that started and stopped in the same breath, stopped because Tom Shannon had heard the bat crack, seen a blur that marked the speeding ball, and lunged with gloved hand outstretched. Something hit his palm with a force that whirled him backward. For a second, his numbed fingers refused to act, then, as he closed them, he fell prone and ploughed his face and shoulder in the clay.

The last thing he had been thinking of

was that there was a man on third who would break for home at the first semblance of a hit. Even the jolt of his fall did not cause him to forget that. Shakily, he scrambled to his knees. He saw a flash of white leaving third. The runner had waited till the drive was caught and now was trying to score before Shannon could recover himself. Still on his knees, Tom slammed the ball at Summers. He saw the catcher drag it in and stoop to intercept the runner's slide. He saw the umpire throw back his arm in the out signal. Dizzily, he got to his feet and began to walk toward the bench. He had only taken three or four steps, however, when a hand gripped his shoulder hard and he heard Happy Jack Edwards' voice.

"Why, you old son-of-a-gun!" it growled. Then—"Tip your cap! Can't yuh hear 'em givin' yuh the hand?"

For the first time, Tom became aware of the applause and cheering that rocked the stands. He tipped his cap and grinned.

Back on the bench, the players slapped him on the back and swore at him naturedly. All the coolness that had frazzled his nerves had evaporated. He had every reason to be extremely happy, but he was not. His eyes kept straying to the hunched-over figure of Carnahan at the end of the players' bench and he felt a soreness within him that was not due to his fall. Suddenly he saw the last few weeks in a different light. He appreciated the emptiness of the life that would be the old timer's portion when he bade good-by to the game. A strange listlessness overwhelmed him that was not dispelled when the Gray Sox clouted out the winning tally in the ninth, nor when he found himself admitted to the coterie of the regulars on the ride back to the hotel.

Once in his room, he jumped under the shower bath, and it was there, splashing and spluttering, that Mac-Arthur found him when he entered in response to a shivery "come in."

Mac seated himself in a chair and watched the boy as he rubbed himself dry.

"Well, Shannon—I guess you've earned the first base job," he remarked.

presently. Then he qualified it by a cautious—"that is, if you can keep up your fielding clip and bat the way you do in practice."

Shannon nodded without enthusiasm. The manager eyed him sharply.

"Don't seem very hilarious," he hazarded at length.

Then Shannon unbosomed.

"I aint," he blurted, and continued with a vociferous plea that he be traded. He told Mac that he knew how Carnahan felt and that it was a darned shame. Finally he stopped for lack of words. Then the manager spoke.

"Well, Kid, I know how you feel." He did not look at the recruit, but stared moodily across the room. "It's tough on a fellow like Lee. He hates to quit the game; but young blood will tell! Baseball and sentiment don't mix and I've got to make this a ball team." His voice turned gruff. "How'd you think I feel

about it? Lee was with this team when they picked me up, raw and green, and he treated me like I was his own son. Many's the time I've been blue and discouraged and he's cheered me up."

"But you're goin' to let him go?"

"Let him go? Who's goin' to let him go! I'm goin' to carry him this year to slap in as regular first baseman the minute you begin to slump! Next year maybe they'll make a scout of him, if he don't come back and take the job away from you!"

A slow grin overspread Tom Shannon's face as the manager rose and opened the door.

Out in the hall, MacArthur smiled quizzically.

"He's a real one, that boy!" he muttered. "Now, I guess I'll pay Lee a visit. I suppose the old fool's got his trunk all packed for a trip to the 'minors!'"

The Soul of Signorina Psythra

By DUFFIELD OSBORNE

I AM a student and admirer of the engraved gems—at once the signets and the talismans—of classic times. I cannot call myself a collector. Somehow, when one becomes the collector, on however high a plane, the truly humanistic interest ends and the mania, the mere craving for absorption and bulk begins.

Well, as for engraved gems, of course I pick up what I find that's interesting and cheap, but the beauty of the thing is that, set in rings, you can wear and enjoy one at a time—in fact, a man can't well do more than that; and then, incidentally, I like to dabble in dreams about the talismanic influence such gems were supposed to possess, and wonder which of mine brings me good fortune. Of course I don't really believe in that

sort of thing, but there's a certain working hypothesis that doesn't leave it altogether ridiculous and I have two gems which certainly seem—but never mind; I mustn't get off on that line. The story's the thing and the reader may think what he pleases.

There's a gem I bought once in a shop on Fifth Avenue—of all the places in the world to get anything "queer" in a mysterious way! It is an oriental sard of a rich, deep red—they don't find them nowadays—and clear as water when you hold it up to the light. It was the face carved in it that fascinated me; a woman's face, deeply cut in the best style of the Augustan age and beautiful and human beyond any likeness I have ever seen—for it is a portrait. Of that I was

convinced from the first, despite the butterfly cut in the field that might proclaim it for a Psyche. Heads of deities or pure idealizations are always older, and then the arrangement of the hair with its little ringlets escaping down the side is very real and you know, somehow, that she wore her hair just that way, because she knew it was becoming. Some Roman lady, doubtless; the daughter, perhaps, of a pro-consul, for it came from Asia Minor, and she had the stone for her signet—or possibly her lover did, though I never liked to think that.

There's a minute Greek "psi" and a "lambda" cut in the field just beneath the butterfly, and the former might point again toward a Psyche, were it not that inscriptions on Roman gems of the period are seldom if ever descriptive. They indicate the names of the owners or the artists, and these letters, I reasoned, might cover both; the lambda standing for the former, since the Romans of those days liked to write their names in Greek letters—an affectation of culture, just as some people of later times have their family mottoes in Latin or French. Naturally, then, the psi would be the first letter of the artist's name, doubtless a Greek.

I bought the stone for a few dollars and had it set in a ring of pure gold. Fourteen or even eighteen carats did not seem appropriate to her.

I was a man of forty, when all this took place. Now I am considerably older and much has happened between, but I doubt if I'm any more "sensible," as you might define the word. I've delved just a little too much in the queer wisdoms of dead and gone ages to think that we of the present necessarily know everything and I've come to realize that the wisdoms of the past have always had a way of becoming wisdoms of the future.

It was two years after I found the little portrait head, that I went abroad again. I had come to wear the ring a good deal—more than my others, though such a subject could have had nothing of that talismanic quality the possibilities of which had always fascinated me.

Of course I gravitated Mediterraneanward. We whose tastes are for the antique, the vital antique that has bred the thought of to-day, always love its centers

of radiation and, this time, my way led to Rome, whence two or three newly developed points of interest were easily accessible. Naturally I have had more or less correspondence with Italian archaeologists and there was ground to hope I might work myself into some excavating despite the jealousy which Italians have of foreigners in such matters. My friend, Professor L—, of the *Accademia Archaeologica* had promised as much, influenced, perhaps, by my rather substantial contribution to the fund for his work.

L— received me most cordially. He was to start in ten days for the problematical site of an old Etruscan town and my learning and experience would be most valuable to him if I would be pleased to grant them, etc., etc. That was the way he put it. My contribution was gratefully acknowledged, quite as an incident.

I had never met the professor's family, but I knew vaguely that it consisted of two sons who were prominent in Roman social life, and a daughter about whom no one seemed to know much. With all their childish confidence and their love of gossip, the Italians can be curiously reticent at times and on some subjects. I had got a notion, somehow, that there was cause for reticence in connection with the Signorina L—, but I had no notion beyond. Probably it was just as childish, from a western standpoint as are their effusive confidences; a broken engagement, perhaps—a much more serious matter with them than a divorce in middle-class American society, if I may use the expression.

You may well believe I was surprised, when the day before we were to set out, the professor informed me casually that his daughter was much interested in his work and would accompany the expedition. He added that if I would do him the honor to dine with him that night, he would be most happy to present me to my fair colleague. His sons were absent, so there would be only the three of us.

As I drove in my *vettura* to the professor's apartment, I was picturing my conception of the signorina and I began to understand the general reticence. A blue-stocking Italian old maid! Something far, far worse than the worst American

scandal could produce in the line of womankind, something the polite Latin could only think of with bated breath—would never venture to submit to the politest verbiage of his polite tongue. How far the realization overthrew my theory, you shall judge.

As she entered the drawing-room where her father and I sat awaiting her, I well nigh sank back, dazed, at a beauty I could never have dreamed of in my most romantic idealization. At once stately and yet well within the symmetry of middle height, breathing character and force and frank sincerity, yet gentle and feminine above all, the combination left me speechless. The delicate mouth, with its pathetic little droop at the corners filled you with an unutterable longing to kiss away every sorrow its lines could express, the perfect contour of cheek and brow and chin, the olive damask of complexion through which the rose flushed fitfully, the low-growing hair, heavy and black as night, but, above all, the eyes, dark and deep and strangely full of dreams—all took possession of me.

I knew not only that I loved her, but, that in some strange fashion, I had always loved her—that I had seen her face somewhere, perhaps in some hitherto undreamed of past in which we had stood together. Surely it was not in this life! Else I could never have forgotten for the shortest instant; but when and where? These were beyond my conception.

All this may seem to you a little romantic for my forty-two years, but there was more. Laugh if you please, but I was *afraid*. Why or of what? I cannot tell you. I do not think it was of any ordinary peril or unhappiness that could threaten me through her, either from the misery of a hopeless passion or from anything that her nature or character concealed. These I felt at once were kindly, sympathetic, pure and womanly. Could it be that there was some danger to herself that her soul projected into mine? Danger, grief to her, I knew at once would be the one affliction my philosophy could never stand against. Strange things are shadowed vaguely to our sub-conscious selves and blind gropings amid illusive facts of ancient times had left me with a mind at once

open and yet analytically scientific. Suffice to say there was a mystery and I saw and felt it; a mystery that involved some element of abject terror that both baffled and shamed me. Can you understand the existence of overwhelming love coming suddenly into being beside such sentiments?

A moment later and I was conscious that we were seated conversing about something; the commonplaces of a first meeting, I suppose, though, for the life of me, I cannot tell. Then dinner was announced and she took my arm.

Once seated at the table I felt my self-poise returning slowly. I ate little, but the professor had a wine of Velletri, rich and full of fire, and I think I drank more than was my wont. Not that it affected me in the least except to steady my nerves and bring me to some realization of what I was hearing and saying.

As might be imagined, the talk was of our projected trip, of the dispute over the site of the city and the professor's reason for fixing it where we were to do our work. In this conversation the signorina took part with a knowledge, a quickness of perception and an interest I had never known a woman to have in such subjects. Her suggestions—and what she said was mainly by way of suggestion—were strangely stimulating and set my mind to work in new channels which promised much. As coming from the daughter of the famous Professor L—this was not so very wonderful perhaps, but, somehow, I had a feeling that he was more indebted to her in the matter than she to him.

Well, the dinner ended and we sat and smoked, the signorina's dainty cigaret joining its rings to ours. A trifling accident, ere the evening closed, was the only blemish on its perfection. By a far-fetched chance, a particle of burning paper from her cigaret floated into my eye. For an instant the pain was intense, but her own much greater, almost disproportionate concern quickly drove it into the background. Only when I had taken leave and reached my rooms did I realize again what discomfort such little things cause. I suppose it explained the fact that, despite repeated bathings in

warm water and salt there was no sleep for me that night. You will want, I take it, a perfectly comprehensible explanation for my wakefulness and I can assure you the inconvenience I suffered was entirely adequate without any romantic adjuncts.

I did not see the signorina during the few days that passed before we were to start. Not that I failed to call, but it chanced, each time, that she was out, engaged, retired, indisposed—I confess I could not altogether rid myself of a notion that there was some intention in it all, and the signs of embarrassment I thought I detected once or twice amid her father's apologies added to my suspicion. Still I can't say that I felt hurt. Much as I cared, much as I longed to see her again—more than I had ever longed for what had seemed to me the greatest desires of my life—I never questioned for a moment the perfect propriety or the best motives for whatever she could do or leave undone.

Let me pass briefly over our journey to the spot the professor had fixed upon for our work and our domiciliation at the little country inn—where our few canned luxuries proved a welcome addition to the black bread, crude cheese, eggs and rough wine that constituted the menu of the establishment. Also I omit the uninteresting details of our hiring of a small force of laborers needed.

I will only say that every hour I passed in the company of the Signorina L— (and she could not now prevent or cut short those hours) filled me with a deeper and stronger love and admiration. Her capability and her knowledge of the subject and the field of our work, gave me ever a deeper wonder. The mystery I had been conscious of at first did not seem to hold ground very firmly or, perhaps, the constant activity and interest in our investigations, not to say the great passion that dominated my being, all helped me to consign such vague sensations to the limbo of oblivion. Only I was conscious of a curious reserve in her manner, very different from her frank and girlish cordiality at our first meeting.

I should say here, why you will understand later, that I did not wear my ring on the night I dined at Professor

L—'s. The stone had seemed loose in the setting and I had left it at a little jeweler's to be burnished in again. The night before we set out I got it back, but I did not want to risk the damage that might come to it from the rough labors in which I foresaw I would often wish to take a manual part. Therefore it had rested secure in my vest pocket.

It was the second day of our actual excavating. Guided by Professor L—'s unerring instinct, the workmen had come upon what seemed to be an undisturbed tomb, and while they cautiously removed the earth that covered and surrounded it, searching always for the entrance, we three stood together at the edge of the excavation, like hounds in leash, eager for the moment when we should be let loose on the quarry.

At last a pick, wielded gently under our constant admonitions, found ready passage under the solid rock, and the shovel-men, hurrying to the point, soon disclosed a dark opening, from which the door slab had evidently fallen away. My torch was already lighted and, as I sprang down, I caught the flash of the signorina's great dark eyes, as she bent forward, following my movements in trembling expectancy.

With the torch before me to test the air, I bent low, and worked my way in. Then as I stood upright in the tomb chamber, peering about to accustom my eyes to the torch light amid Stygian gloom, it seemed to me as if the world crashed around me.

I did not lose consciousness. I knew perfectly what had happened. The roof of the tomb, perhaps masonry that had become loose, perhaps solid rocks that the picks and the weight of the men had weakened, had caved in on me; and now, with my foot held fast under something, I lay waiting, wondering vaguely whether another fall might not come at any moment and crush me out of existence.

I could hear the excited voices of the laborers, then a few sharp words, followed by the subdued hum that told they were under discipline again, that the work of rescue had begun, and then—nothing. What with the nervous shock and the pain, I had fainted. The next thing I knew, I was lying in the big bed

in my room at the inn and the professor and a little man with a pointed beard whom I guessed to be a doctor were standing by me.

The latter was speaking earnestly in a quick, low voice. At the moment his words made little impression on me. Afterward I recalled them many times with a dull, puzzled sense, and once, at last, with wondering comprehension.

"Yes, my dear Professor," he said, "I think I may promise you that your friend will suffer no permanent injury this time. Believe me, I sympathize with you deeply but you will pardon me if I say that it is well the influence should cease. The third occasion is always most serious." And then I knew that my friend was assenting gravely and in a voice that seemed to be broken by emotion.

Sympathize with the professor? Why with *him* and what did all this about "third times" and "influence" mean? It was quite beyond me in my weak condition, but I was distinctly conscious of disappointment that the signorina was not present, that she should not feel enough interest in my accident to install herself as nurse. Under such circumstances, women men loved always did that in the stories, I reflected querulously.

A little later I found my mind working more clearly. The doctor had gone and L— was sitting by my bed with an expression on his face which I could only describe as one of utter and deep despondency.

He roused himself quickly when I spoke, described the accident and congratulated me that it was not worse, hurriedly repeating the doctor's diagnosis and his assurance that I would be perfectly sound again in a couple of weeks. A terrifying thought flashed across me; one that explained the look I had surprised.

"Your daughter?" I said, my voice trembling with apprehension. "She was not injured, was she?"

"Not in the least," he answered shortly and the cloud on his brow deepened again. "She returns to Rome to-day," he continued in a curiously constrained voice. "I will stay with you here until you are in condition to be moved."

"I shall see her, I trust, before she

goes?" I asked eagerly, for I was by no means reassured. To be sure, she might be returning to make arrangements for my removal, but, on the other hand, I was full of fear that she, too, had been hurt. Naturally he might wish to conceal it from me and the look I had surprised would be explainable. Somehow I knew that my accident and the consequent interruption to his work were inadequate solutions.

In reply he seemed to fence vaguely. "Perhaps," he said, "but my daughter has her arrangements to make and it is necessary she should go at once."

You may imagine his words and manner only strengthened my anxiety. Surely, she must realize that I cared and her going now—the only woman of intelligence in the place—without a word, without even seeing me—was too cold-blooded to be imagined. My weakened nerves could not stand the strain. I accused him of trying to conceal the fact that she, also, had been injured. I refused to accept his halting protestations and assurances; I laid bare my heart, until he understood clearly that nothing but the sight of her, if only for a moment, would prevent a serious access to the fever that my symptoms already indicated. At last he yielded to my entreaties, but with a reluctance I would have found it hard to explain had I not been borne too far by my feelings to consider anything save my fear.

Certainly if I desired it, the signorina would see me before she left, he assented, but I would understand that it could be but for a moment. An invalid with such a suspicious nature as mine, he continued, with a pitiful attempt at lightness, must be humored even in his most groundless suspicions.

He turned to leave the room and I lay back on the pillow. Then a new thought flashed across my mind. I wanted my ring. Perhaps I had a vague notion it would be safer on my finger than in my vest pocket while I was helpless in a house full of peasants of whom I knew nothing. Perhaps—but I assure you I had no definite reason for my request.

After a little rummaging among my clothes he found it and I felt its pressure with a curious sense of satisfaction.

"I will send my daughter to you at once" he said, as he turned again to go, "but you will pardon her if she remains but a moment."

I do not think I have ever seen so sad a face as entered my room a few minutes later; the extreme pallor, the circles under the great dark eyes, all swept me from any consideration of myself and my misfortunes that might have oppressed me. I thought only of her and I knew she had suffered—was suffering. Could it be on my account? The idea was healing beyond all lotions.

She came hesitatingly toward my bed and stood there, but her eyes avoided mine. A great surge of passion, of vague pity overwhelmed me. All my doubts were dispelled. I reached out eagerly and took her hand.

"Thank you for coming to me," was all I could say for a moment, and then as her cold hand rested in mine, listless but conveying to me a strange sense that it wished to withdraw itself but could not, my feelings found voice.

"You were going away without seeing me? Don't you know I love you?"

Her hand strove feebly to escape, but I held it fast. Her eyes were still averted.

"No—no," she half gasped. "You must not."

"Why? Can't you care for me? I shall love you—always. There can never be anyone else."

"Oh, do not say that! There must; there must—"

For a moment her eyes turned toward me, as if drawn irresistibly, but there was a look in them I had never seen in eyes—shall never see again: a terror pleading in its intensity, the powerlessness of some hunted thing that sees impending the peril it cannot flee from.

Strangely enough I, too, was conscious of that peril—knew, in some way, that it menaced us both, but I knew more. I knew that she cared, and, in that knowledge, danger counted for nothing.

From the flash of joy in my face her eyes fell as if struck down by a blow. They rested upon my hands that held hers, now trembling violently, and then the strangest thing of all happened.

I saw the terror pass. I saw the great dark wells within which her soul seemed to lie, grow soft and luminous. Her hand

slipped from mine. I knew, now, in some way, that she would not try to leave me—that she would never try again. Her fingers reached out, still trembling, and touched my ring.

I do not know why I did what I did. There seemed nothing else to do; one act that fate demanded. I drew the ring hastily from my finger and placed it in her hand, and, as I did so, she sank down beside the couch and buried her face in the coverlet, her whole body quivering, as if rent by some overwhelming force. My strength arose above injuries and illness. Had it been the moment of passing life, it must have been the same. I drew her to me and, as I kissed her again and again, tears which I knew were happy ones fell upon my face.

Suddenly a flash of comprehension illumined my soul. Her face! *Now* I knew where I had seen it. It was the face cut in my sard.

A sense of the compelling mystery of it all followed the wave of realization and seemed to draw me back into the depths, as with the force of the receding billow. Why was all this? What connection could there be between it and the things that had happened?

She had raised her head now and was looking intently at the gem, her lips slightly parted, her eyes full of wonder and a little fear.

"It is you," I murmured.

"It is my soul," she said simply—"the likeness of Psythra, daughter of Caius Lucilius, pro-consul of Asia, cut for her lover, a wicked Egyptian, by the Greek, Philemon, and so truly that henceforth the woman's soul dwelt forever in the stone that she could never regain. You do not understand such matters," and she looked full into my face. "It has been the tradition of our house that, until the gem was regained, its daughters must bear her name and—and—"

The voice died away. I was hopelessly puzzled, for no western mind can comprehend these mystic Italian beliefs; but I drew her to me again, and, as her dark eyes sought mine, closer, closer, she murmured:

"I can look at you now, my beloved. The *jettatura* is vanquished, I will never harm you any more, for you have found and given back to me my soul."

The Red Thread

By PHILIP R. KELLAR



BOB MARTIN, sheriff of Custer county, stopped his pony at the top of the little rise and gazed northward across the prairie. An observer, had one been there, would have said he was not seeing anything. He looked at nothing in particular yet saw everything in the range of his vision. One unaccustomed to the country would have supposed there was nothing to be seen except a vast stretch of level ground, brown in the bright September sunshine, with here and there a slight roll, and off to the northwest the faint outline of a range of hills.

The sheriff was looking for a saddle pony that had been turned out on the range in mid-summer. There seemed no place where a horse could hide, but Martin knew the ground was broken here and there by great coulees in which a hundred horses might graze unseen unless the looker happened to be near the edge of one of the ancient water courses.

Martin was vaguely conscious of a feeling that he was close to something which he should examine. A former cow-boy in the days when the cow-men were the kings of the land, he had been elected sheriff, and re-elected repeatedly, because of a peculiar, intuitive knack of detecting crimes, sometimes even in time to prevent their commission. He explained this by remarking that he did not begin work with preconceived ideas, but permitted himself to drift along with the evidence.

"I just follow the trail and let it do the deciding."

His work was not done in such haphazard manner as this explanation might indicate. Those familiar with his exploits frequently were aware that Sheriff Bob was hot on the trail long before he would be conscious of the fact, or at least before he would admit it, audibly.

To satisfy his vague feeling, the sheriff again looked northward and then swept the horizon with a calm, unexpectant gaze.

"Nothing here for us; come along!"

He gathered up the reins that had been resting over the saddle horn, and the pony's muscles gave the slight tightening preliminary to starting. At that instant Martin dropped his quirt and the well-trained pony stopped instantly. Bob leaped down. As his hand was about to close over the quirt handle he caught sight of a red gleam in the brown grass a few feet away. He straightened up stiffly and gazed at the gleam. With a grunt he strode forward and picked it up—a piece of red woolen thread about two inches long. He turned it over in his hand several times, again looked about the prairie, and returned to the pony.

"Huh," he grunted. "Wonder what it is, anyway? Looks like a piece of fringe from some giddy cowpuncher's gaudy saddle blanket, but I don't know any boy around this part of the country that sports such a thing."

He twirled the thread between finger and thumb and was about to remount when he noticed the faint tracks of a horse at a spot where the grass was quite sparse and the sandy soil loose. Apparently without aim the sheriff examined the tracks and learned that they had been made by an animal which had cast the shoe from the left forefoot. The tracks wandered to the northwest. Martin stuffed the red thread into his pocket, mounted, and turned the pony's head in the same direction.

"That may be my bronc," he said. "There's a coulee over this way about seven miles."

For half an hour he followed the trail, sometimes faint, sometimes quite distinct. It passed through a small coulee where the ground was a little moist and soft and the tracks were very plain. Sheriff Bob turned in his saddle to look behind at his own trail.

"Yep," he announced, as though he had been discussing something, "that horse had a rider. Trail is too plain for just a pony. Wonder who he was? Oh, well, anyway he's making for the Tramping Lake coulee and I reckon we might as well go along the same way. Gyp's just as likely to be there as anywhere."

Gyp was the pony he was in search of. At the sound of his name the sheriff's mount pricked up his ears, and responded quickly to Martin's touch on the reins.

While ascending the opposite side of the depression Martin suddenly stopped, dismounted and picked up a cigaret paper, made of brown corn straw and split where the owner had broken it while trying to roll a cigaret.

"Now, boy," he mused, "who is there about here that smokes cigarets Mexican style? Must be the same fellow that owns that giddy saddle blanket. They'd go together pretty well. Don't suppose it's some stranger that's trying to steal my horse, do you?"

The sheriff laughed softly; the pony flicked his ears and waited patiently for the next move, conscious that his master was trailing the horse with the one cast shoe, though this fact was just dawning upon the sheriff's consciousness.

Across the level stretch they followed the trail for nearly an hour longer, the sheriff scarcely noticing it as he kept a sharp lookout for his other pony. They reached the southern end of the Tramping Lake coulee, and followed the tracks down the sudden descent into the bed of the old lake. It was a deep depression, about ten miles long, at the northern end of which was quite a large body of water. The outlet stream, flowing southward, petered out long before the southern end was reached. The water kept the ground moist, and the heavy soil took and retained the footprints very clearly.

No other trace of man or horse was seen until Sheriff Bob had traversed half of the length of the coulee. At this point a well beaten path crossed the depression. The trail he followed led directly over it, and was there joined by another.

"Uhuh," Martin grunted. "There's two of them now, and both have riders."

He rode half a mile to the crest of the western side for a possible sight of ponies or men on the prairie on that side, returned and took up the trail of the two horses northward.

Three miles farther on they came upon the remains of a camp, pitched on a dry and sandy spot. The campers had evidently had a feast. Sheriff Bob discovered the skin of a jack-rabbit and a little later he found three empty shells.

"Huh—shot him with an automatic revolver, eh," he commented sarcastically. "No wonder they got him. Must be some of the tenderfeet that's come out to the Bowdin opening." He mechanically put the shells in his pocket, remounted and went onward.

Bowdin was a new town on a recently opened section of the Indian reservation that bordered the cattle country of which Crook, the county seat of Custer county, had once been the capital. Bowdin was three days old, a frantic, crowded town of five hundred persons, principally men, and some dozen houses. The railroad had intended to run over from Crook in time for the opening, but had been delayed by the equinoctial storms, and all communication with the outside world was by horse and auto-

mobile. Though it was in what was to be an independent county, and consequently outside his territory, Sheriff Bob had been holding himself in readiness to respond to a call for help, and had been agreeably surprised when the call did not come.

Up the coulee the trail of the two horses led him, circling around the lake, and emerging at the north end, among the hills. After a little winding about, the tracks stopped in a mass of other tracks of horses, men and wheels, on the newly made road between Crook and Bowdin. Sheriff Bob jerked the pony to a sudden stop; his sleepy manner disappeared, his eyes darted quick, searching glances on all sides.

"Been some sort of a scrap here, boy," he said quickly as he leaped to the ground. "I reckon that's the reason I followed that trail so long."

He went over the ground carefully, thoroughly, searchingly, his practiced eyes noting many apparently trifling details. Out of the mass of marks on the spongy, though firm ground, he finally began to evolve a consecutive story.

"Mr. Three-foot and his friend," said the Sheriff, pointing as he explained, as though the pony could understand him perfectly, "came to this point together. Three-foot hid behind that boulder over there while the other got under cover behind that clump of bushes on the other side of the road. They waited a good long time—their hiding places are all tracked up, horses got restless.

"Then comes along the road from Crook, a light, mountain buggy hitched to a couple of high-steppers. I reckon they were not broncs, either, from the way they covered the ground. The buggy gets here and Three-foot and his friend come from under cover. The buggy stops mighty quick—see where the horses' sharp shoes dug into the ground? There's a short scrap. There's two men in the buggy and they both shoot a couple of times—one's got a thirty-eight. He's the driver. See where his bullets hit the boulder over there where Three-foot was standing? The other's got a dinky little thirty-two that he uses to spit with a couple of times at Three-foot's friend.

"The driver gets a ball in the hand—blood dripped over the ground. Three-foot gets winged too, maybe in the right arm or hand. He dropped his gun. There's the mark of it on the ground—and it was an automatic. He's the fellow that shot that jack back in the coulee."

The sheriff paused, passed his hand across his forehead, and went on more slowly:

"But what was it all about, anyway? Three-foot aint a cowboy—least he doesn't wear cowboy boots. He's got on a pair of city shoes, and so's his friend. They walk up to the buggy, careful. There's a little pow-wow; Three-foot reaches over—see where his toes go in deeper—and takes something. The buggy drives on towards Bowdin. Three-foot and his friend follow a little ways, then turn and come back. I reckon we'd better follow them. Trail's pretty fresh and we're not more than a couple of hours late at the most."

The trail of the two horses back towards Crook was quite plain for a mile. Then it left the new-made road and followed the course of a little canyon. Half a mile farther on it disappeared with startling suddenness, among the pebbles, rocks and small boulders in the bed of the ravine. Sheriff Bob dismounted and searched vainly. Presently he found a tiny piece of gunny sack.

"That's it, boy," he said. "They wrapped their ponies' feet to keep the shoes from marking the rocks. We might pick up the trail again, but I reckon we'd better be getting on home and find out what's happened. Aha!"

With a cry of delight he picked up, from behind a rock, a piece of black cloth that had been used for a mask. It was large enough to cover the entire face, and it had been tied with cotton twine pieced out with red woolen thread, exactly like the piece in the sheriff's pocket.

"All right, Mr. Bright Man," Sheriff Bob laughed. "I reckon you've left a plain enough trail. Twine broke, did it, and you had to get a string from your saddle blanket, eh?"

It was the middle of the afternoon and Sheriff Bob rode rapidly, intending to reach Crook before sundown. Near the town he made a little detour and

entered from the east, going directly to his office. He felt a vague disappointment when his deputy informed him there was nothing new to report.

Sheriff Bob put his pony in the livery barn and strolled over to the railroad station, which also was the telegraph and telephone office.

"Hello, Jim," he greeted the agent. "Anything new to-day? I've been out looking for my other bronc."

"Nothing much," replied Benson. "I guess you know we're going to have another gambling house for you to look after."

"No"—Martin was surprised. "Who's going to do it?"

"Tony Beman. Know him?" The sheriff shook his head. "He's that little sport in the silk tile, white vest and red tie that's been bucking the roulette wheel at the Jubilee for a week." Martin nodded comprehendingly. "He says he's going in for poker, though, because making money on the percentage games is too slow."

"Must be from Chicago, to want to get it all in such a hurry," Martin laughed. "What's his roll?"

"Fifteen thousand. Funny thing,"—the agent's face brightened—"I got a couple of packages of money to-day by express, and both of them for the same amount, and from the same place, Chicago. One was for this Beman—said his partner sent it to him—and the other was for the new bank over at Bowdin. Gee, I wish I could get my hands on a package like that—and keep it." The agent sighed regretfully. "I expect you'll have a call from Beman pretty soon. He thinks he's got to fix you—just like he would in Chicago. I told him that wouldn't go out here, but he didn't believe me."

On the way back to the office Sheriff Martin passed the livery stable. The new gambling proprietor-to-be was in front, waiting for Buck to finish saddling a pony.

"Say, Mr. Martin," Beman called, "I heard you were out of town and was just getting my pony saddled to hunt you up for a little important business talk."

"I just got back," the sheriff replied, his apparently unseeing eyes taking a

complete stock of Beman and his mount. "I'm on my way to the office now."

Beman told Buck to leave the pony saddled as he might want him anyway, and joined Martin.

"Your bronc?" Martin asked, jerking his finger over his shoulder at the pony.

"Yes," the gambler laughed. "And I got stuck. Bought him, saddle, bridle, and all from a rancher the first of the week. He stuck me for a hundred and fifty. I was green and didn't know you could duplicate the outfit for half the money."

Martin merely smiled in reply. He had noted that the left front foot of the pony had recently been shod. He had noted that the blanket was gray—which fact neutralized the new shoe; more than neutralized it, for there probably could be found a hundred horses whose left forefoot had been shod recently, while so far as Martin knew, there was not a bright red saddle blanket in the country.

The two men chatted as they walked to the office, of the country in general, the prospects of Bowdin, the disappearance of the old-time cattle business.

"It makes me sick to see the country all cut up and the old days gone," said the gambler. Noting the sheriff's questioning look as he silently contrasted Beman's appearance with his words, the gambler added quickly: "I used to be a puncher; worked down in southern Texas. Got the poker habit, couldn't keep from gambling, threw up my job and became a professional. Drifted east, and now I'm back here."

Martin led Beman to his inner office, telling the deputy not to disturb them. As soon as they were seated, on opposite sides of the table, the gambler drew from his pocket a package of tobacco and one of cigaret papers. With them came a fresh rabbit foot, that had caught in the string of the tobacco bag. It dropped onto the table. The gambler grinned as he picked it up.

"Luck piece," he explained.

"It's a jack, isn't it, though?"

"Yes, but I thought it would do as well as a cotton-tail."

"Rifle?" Martin appeared only slightly interested.

"No, gun."

"Good shooting," the sheriff spoke flatteringly. "Any man that can get a jack-rabbit with a forty-four is shooting some."

"Oh, I'm not that good," the gambler protested. "I might have done it once, but I use an automatic now. If you don't hit with the first you're likely to land the second."

"Pretty much like using a shot-gun," commented the sheriff. Then he added in a business-like tone—"Well, what's the business?"

"Why, I—that is my partner and I—want to open up a gambling house in Crook."

"Why not Bowdin?"

"I think Crook will be the best town—at least for a few weeks. That's all the time we want—just time enough to make a clean up and a quick get-away before we start a losing streak. I know that doesn't sound very much on the square," Beman explained hastily as he caught the disapproving look on the sheriff's face. "But we've got only fifteen thousand dollars. We've been in the game a long time and we want to quit it. We've dropped several good fortunes by hanging on too long."

"Fifteen thousand is a good big sum," said the sheriff.

"For two men?" The gambler spoke scornfully and began making his cigaret. Martin's glance grew keener when he extracted a brown, corn paper from the package.

"We don't see many people using those papers out here."

"I got in the habit of using 'em in the southwest," Beman explained. "Pshaw," he exclaimed as the paper broke, the tobacco scattering on the table, "I'm always doing that. Got a hang-nail that seems to get in the way and cut the paper."

Martin silently, casually, reached forward and picked up the split paper, looking vacantly at it while the gambler was busy with another. The chain was nearly complete. He was almost positive that Beman was the man on the horse with the one cast shoe. There was the cigaret paper with its peculiar slit, the automatic revolver, the jack-rabbit foot. Back in the barn was the horse

with the new shoe on the left forefoot. But where was the red saddle blanket that would make identification as certain as circumstantial evidence could? And what was done on the road to Bowdin? The sheriff's intuition told him that something wrong had happened, but he couldn't arrest a man on intuition of this character.

"Well," Martin finally said, "what is it you want me to do?"

"Why, er—" Beman stammered. "I know it's not strictly according to law to run a gambling house wide open. People are getting kind of particular. They're making us do business under cover. Made us shut up the front doors in Chicago—but—we fixed it with the officials."

"You run a square game here in Crook and they won't bother you." Martin's face grew hard.

"Oh, we'll run a square game, all right, but we wanted to be sure of things. The next three weeks are going to be pretty lively and we're counting on doubling our money twice. If we're not bothered any we wouldn't miss—well—say about five thousand dollars."

Beman was so engrossed with his own thoughts that he did not notice the way the sheriff's jaws clicked and the sudden light that came into his eyes when he caught sight of a bandage around the gambler's right wrist, that had been hidden until then by his sleeve.

"You know," the gambler hurried on, "there are always some sore-heads, even in the best of towns, and they might want to pinch us on a trumped-up charge. Well, the loss of two or three days would mean a lot to us, besides the black eye it would do the business after it was all straightened out. I've always figured it's a lot less expensive to straighten things out before they happen."

The gambler, warmed by his rapid talking and the suspense, unbuttoned his vest. The deputy burst into the room, excited, the words sticking in his throat because of his very eagerness to utter them.

"Bob, Bob!" the deputy began, "there's a man out here that's just come from—"

"Wait a minute, Tommy," the sheriff held up a warning hand. "I've got something to say to this gentleman." He spoke softly, but his keen glance was fastened upon the long four-in-hand, red woolen, knitted necktie, stringing down in front of Beman's opened vest. It was raveled at one end and the exact shade of the two pieces in the sheriff's pocket. "Just stand where you are, Tommy," he went on, "and listen while I tell you and Mr. Beman a little story."

"But, Bob," the deputy started to protest, "this is important."

"It will wait, Tommy. Now listen."

Keeping a careful watch of the gambler's every move, and with one hand on the butt of his forty-four, the sheriff recited a graphic story of the journeying of the man on the horse with the one cast shoe. Beman did not once alter his expression of amused expectancy. The deputy, impatient at first, slowly grew interested. The sheriff made no mention of the red thread, of the jack-rabbit skin, of the automatic revolver shells. When he reached the point in his tale where the trail was lost, and paused, the gambler leaned back with a quiet, relieved smile.

"A pretty clever tale, Mr. Martin," he spoke naturally, "too bad you couldn't read it all in the trail, and tell who they were and what they did. Now," he changed the subject suddenly, "what about my business?"

"I can tell what they did," the deputy began in great excitement. "They—"

"There, there, Tommy," the sheriff remonstrated. "Just one more minute." He leaned forward, looking the gambler steadily in the eye. In one hand, under the table, was held the mask. "Now, Mr. Beman," Bob went on softly, "this about your business. You were the man on that horse."

"Oh, now, Mr. Martin, that's carrying a joke too far." The gambler spoke with every appearance of humorous sincerity.

"And you,"—Martin disregarded the interruption—"wore this!"

He spread the mask on the table, the self-possessed Beman giving a faint start. The sheriff pointed to the red string.

"You took that from your necktie."

"Oh, well," the gambler shrugged his shoulders, "I suppose, since you've already made up your mind, it would be useless to argue with you. But what if I did. What are you going to do? What have I done? You've got me in the dark."

As the gambler's right hand crept slowly towards his coat pocket the sheriff smiled grimly.

"I'm going to arrest you," he said. "Don't try to shoot, because I've got you covered and so has Tommy. Tommy, come put the cuffs on Mr. Beman. He's one of the two men that robbed Tony and Jack Norton of fifteen thousand dollars they were taking over to Bowdin for the new bank. I think you'll find the money in his pockets."

Beman smilingly held out his hands. "I've got more sense than to resist under the circumstances. I know enough about juries to know they'd convict me quicker on that red thread than on the testimony of people who might have seen the job. What do I get if I turn state's evidence, put you on the track of the other man, and return the money?"

"That's for the judge to decide. My part of the job is finished," replied the sheriff. He turned to the deputy. "Was this robbery the thing you wanted to talk about?"

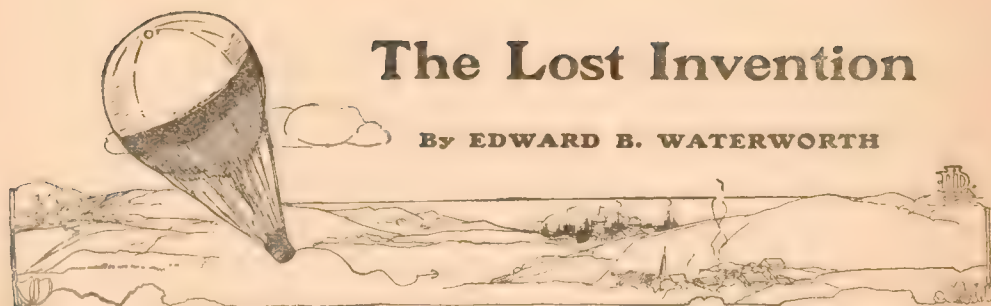
"Yes," Tommy replied. "But I'd like to know how in the devil you knew. I got the first message from Bowdin, and nobody else heard it."

"Yes, Martin," the gambler said. "I'd like to have you clear up that point too."

"Oh," Sheriff Bob laughed, "that was easy after I'd identified you. This morning the Norton boys get \$15,000 by express. At the same time you take out of the express office a phony package, which you said contained \$15,000. Later you turn up with \$15,000. Isn't it natural to conclude that you got yours by taking it away from the Nortons?"

"But how did you know my package wasn't the real goods? I didn't open it till I got to my room."

"That's the reason I knew," the sheriff smiled. "People are not in the habit of taking an express agent's word for it when it comes to turning over a sum as large as \$15,000."



The Lost Invention

By EDWARD B. WATERWORTH

IT'S uncanny enough to have to keep humoring a man because you think he's crazy and because you're all alone with him and don't know what else to do. But when you find you can actually do the crazy things he asks you to do—and without a bit of trouble, either—it gives one a sensation that can't be described.

Here I'd been sitting beside Frazer for more than an hour, saying—"Sure; that's so, old man," swearing to myself to hear Grinnell moving about below, half drunk as I knew, and waiting for morning when the doctor would be due. But Frazer seemed to get more and more light-headed as the night went on and the storm outside rose, and whenever I agreed with him he'd curse me and shriek that he could see I didn't believe him and that I thought he was looney. As I didn't believe him and was positive he was crazy, my talk, meant to soothe him, didn't have any effect. Finally he propped himself up in bed, quivering with the effort, and said, in a matter of fact way:

"Bring that safe over here, will you?"

He pointed to a big steel affair that must have weighed a ton. It was in the corner away from his bed and I looked at him doubtfully. If I walked over there, he might take a notion into his head to jump out of bed and become violent. So I just smiled and nodded and said easily:

"All right, Jack. I'll do it the first thing in the morning. But you'd better lie down and get some rest."

"I know what you're thinking," he said quietly, all his temper gone, "but

supposing I *am* on the verge of a rioting mania? Hadn't you better go over there and open the door and call to Grinnell? Even if he is half drunk he's able to sing. And if he's able to do that, he might help you hold me down."

"Yes, Jack," I pleaded, "but do lie down—that's a good fellow. You're in a bad way now."

"I'll do it, Bob, on one condition," he answered with a quiet smile, "and that is, that you try, at least, to bring that safe here."

He pressed a little button as he spoke. It was on the wall and I thought maybe he had an electric light arrangement somewhere. But no light came. It was just another one of his crazy notions, I guessed. But, as it wouldn't do any harm to see if he understood what he was saying, I just shrugged my shoulders, stepped across the room, put a hand lightly on either side of the big safe—it was at least three feet across—and then stepped back sick and dizzy. For the little pressure I had placed on it had moved it half way across the room.

Unconsciously, I had moved my hands toward the bed. I hadn't used enough force to lift a pasteboard box, it seemed to me. Yet there was the safe in the middle of the floor. I put my hand on it doubtfully. It was solid as a rock. I couldn't budge it with my shoulders. I know it was a scared face I turned on Frazer.

"Jack," I asked as quietly as I could, "does this mean I've gone crazy, too?"

Frazer laughed triumphantly to himself. Then he sank back on the pillow in a spasm of coughing.

"You're not crazy, Bob. Please bring the safe all the way over here," he answered as soon as he could speak.

If he had said to swallow it, I'd have tried it. I was fairly stupefied. I picked the big metal safe up and noticed that it seemed to rise in my hands. It was like lifting up some living thing. The only sensation I could recollect to compare with it was that rising feeling I used to know as a boy when I ran with a big kite and finally felt it take the air currents and commence to ascend.

I put the safe down by his bedside and it rested there as lightly as a feather, swaying for a moment. Then it settled down solidly. I could tell that by the sharp snap and creaking of the boards beneath it. Frazer fumbled at the combination and opened it. Inside was a mass of papers, apparently of little account, for he brushed them away impatiently. In the little cash drawer was a tiny leather case, carefully strapped. He picked this up, reverently.

"Bob," he said slowly, "this little case contains the discovery which means the changing of the world's history. It means the supremacy of this country over all nations of the world—for the contents have shown me the secret that Europe is trying hard to solve to-day—the only really successful solution of aerial navigation."

While he was speaking he had brought out a little bottle containing some white powder with a metallic sheen. A common cork was thrust into the neck and two electric wires were inserted through this, the top being carefully covered with a mass of sealing wax. The wires were connected to an ordinary battery which stood inside the safe. He set this bottle on the table by his bed and slipped the ring from a gas burner around its neck, just as if he was about to place the globe of a lamp or gas jet over it.

"Feel the weight of that," he commanded.

I lifted the bottle gingerly enough. It seemed to weigh a little more than a pound.

"Now, pick up a piece of that lead you see over there—that piece used for a door-weight will do. What do you think that weighs?"

"About five pounds, I guess."

"Well, put it on top of this bottle; rest it across this ring."

I did as he ordered and he bent forward and pushed the zinc and copper plates of the battery down into the acid. I saw the bottle on the table tremble for an instant.

"Now, lift it up," he said.

I lifted it and gasped. But I was getting used to the matter now and was prepared. The bottle, lead and all, seemed to weigh no more than a feather. Again Frazer bent down and pushed the knob on top of the battery again. The bottle rose from my palm and hung suspended in the air. Frazer grasped it and shook it lightly until the lead weight floated rather than slid from the supporting ring. The next instant I was hopping about on one foot, holding the toe of the other in my hand. For the lead had fallen with the full weight of five pounds squarely on my slipper. Frazer leaned back and laughed until he started coughing again.

"I wanted to show you that lead becomes its original weight when it is removed from this influence," he remarked at last, nodding toward the bottle. "So long as that was resting on the ring there it had no weight at all. You see what it is now, don't you?"

"Complete destruction of gravity?"

"Exactly. It's taken me years to find it, Bob. I've worked it out at last. That's why I asked you to come to this forsaken hole and see me at this hour. I know I must have seemed crazy to you—I could read your thoughts all along and it made me kind of impatient, even though I couldn't blame you. But now you're convinced, I'll get Grinnell to send up an air machine that is really an air ship—not one of those uncertain aeroplanes or uncontrolled balloons. They must have been named dirigibles as a joke. I want to send it up while it's night, so the natives of this section of Missouri won't see it."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Send up a flying machine in this kind of a storm—and with Grinnell incapacitated as well?"

"That's just the reason," he responded quietly. "I don't believe in making tests under favorable conditions. An air ship

to be of real use must be able to go out in weather that would wreck the strongest ship afloat. In fact, if aerial warfare is to be an important factor in destiny, it must be far more under control than navies are at present. If you can see this air machine operate in such a storm with a drunken pilot, I guess you'll admit its merits, wont you?"

I nodded assent.

"Then tell Grinnell to show you the machine, Bob," he said, falling weakly back on the pillow. "I'll tell you about how I happened to discover these things when you get back. Please move the safe back before you go."

I lifted the huge affair as easily as before, but, when it was probably half an inch from the floor, as I was about to set it down, I felt my hands slip suddenly. The mass had dropped the balance of the way with a jar that shook the entire house, the impact causing the rollers beneath to bite deeply into the splintered wood floor. Turning, I saw Frazer with his hand on the little button.

"Just another example of the fact that gravity returns when the current is turned off," he said smilingly. "The safe, if you'll notice, has wires connected with the bottom."

Still in a daze, I picked my way downstairs. Grinnell was singing lustily to himself as I entered the kitchen. The disordered room, the bare staircase down which I had passed, and the interior of the house generally, clearly bespoke the fact that there was no feminine hand to keep order there. The room designed for a sitting-room and that which had probably been intended for the dining-room were both roughly fitted with wicker furniture, a cot or two, and a couple of small tables on which newspapers and periodicals were littered. The bare floors bore the signs of tobacco juice; cigar stumps lay carelessly in the corners, and blackened pipes and spilled tobacco ashes were in evidence on all sides.

Grinnell and Frazer had used the kitchen both for cooking and as a place wherein to eat their meals, and its aspect clearly indicated the slipshod fashion in which things were run. An incandescent light, connected with an

array of exposed batteries, was illumined by this storage force, and cast its light over the disordered room. A table piled high with unwashed dishes and a stove without a fire showed that Grinnell had let things run down completely since Frazer fell ill. Grinnell himself was lounging in a wooden arm chair, humming noisily as he looked over the sporting pages of a paper. A bottle of whisky, half emptied, and a pungent odor of spirits in the room, told how he had been passing his time.

For a moment I stood silent at the doorway to adjust myself to the surroundings. Only that afternoon, on reporting at the newspaper office where I worked, I had received a telegram from Frazer asking me to visit him at his place on the Iron Mountain road, some forty miles below St. Louis. He said he had something worth a good "story" and the city editor, more through lack of anything else for me to do than because he believed in the statement, had told me to take a run down to the house.

I knew the location of Frazer's abode, as when he had purchased it a year before, he had taken down a party of newspaper men by boat, driving them over from the landing. It was a wild enough little spot, set down in the foothills which stretch back from the Mississippi at that point; his neighbors were widely scattered and mostly lived in the little valleys just below him. Land covered with scrub oak with rock projecting through the shallow clay soil, showed why the region was sparsely settled, even though near a big city. His house was on the summit of a hill, wrapped about with stunted oak and a few straggling hickory trees, around which flourished a tangle of blackberry bushes. When I had driven over from the station the evening before—it was now about three o'clock in the morning—the farmer who had brought me in his rough wagon was obliged to set me down at the foot of the hill. The road was too steep for his team. The night had been coming on, so I had walked briskly up the overgrown walk and was soon within reach of the house.

There was nothing in the two-storied frame house to present the stately aspect

of the House of Usher that Poe wrote about. Yet its appearance had brought the story suddenly to my mind. There was the same atmosphere about it, so to speak, when seen in the wild sunset of an evening which foretold the coming storm. The whole place had a weird, uncanny look in the red light and the long, low shed which had been erected in the rear looked as gloomy as a tomb in the fading glow.

I had found Frazer a desperately sick man. It was a malarial attack made worse by some nervous reaction. The man was too weak to get out of bed, but had insisted on talking all evening, in a high, feverish way, in spite of my urgings to lie down to rest. Finally, when the storm had broken just after we had completed a late supper, he commenced a long dissertation on the art of flying. I paid but little attention and had fallen asleep by the fire in his room when he had roused me again to convince me that I had possibly stumbled on the sensational story I sought. So here I was, gazing half in expectation and half in doubt at the semi-intoxicated Grinnell. He had heard my footsteps and looked up to nod familiarly.

"You want to see the affair go up, do you?" he said rather thickly, but evidently in full possession of his faculties. "Well, it's a nasty night, but so much the better; it'll prove what she can do."

"Grinnell," I said, "what's all this that Frazer is trying to do? I never knew before that he had the faintest knowledge of aeronautics."

"He hasn't any now, so far as I can make out," said Grinnell in a matter-of-fact way. "He's just stumbled on a discovery, that's all. But it's going to be a money-maker for both of us—and you ought to get a good story out of it."

I had known the man when he was a machinist on the same paper for which I worked. He was clever enough with tools and was a valuable man when anything went wrong with the linotype machines. But his fondness for liquor had been his bane. The foreman was always uneasy when he reported for duty, for fear he'd throw out of gear any machine he started to tamper with, due to some sudden effect of alcohol. So his substi-

tute had finally been moved up to his position and Grinnell had thrown in his lot with Frazer.

He arose now and lighted a lantern steadily enough, showing no signs of the whisky he had drunk except in his speech. I had expected to see him with an electric flash lamp ready to hand, as plenty of dry batteries for miner's lights were lying broken about the room. But, in the careless fashion in which everything was handled, he had evidently run out of supplies or broken all available lamps. I said he walked steadily enough. But when he opened the door and a perfect gale roared in, causing the blaze of the lantern to jump and the electric globe to swing wildly from the ceiling, while a perfect torrent of rain swirled through the doorway, I felt sure his brain wasn't right. No man in his senses would dream of going up in an air ship in such a storm. Even as he prepared to walk across to the shed it was necessary for him to bend against the force of the wind.

"Grinnell," I shouted, trying to make myself heard over the noise of the storm, "let's wait until this blows over."

All I could hear in return was something that sounded like "come on" from the dark figure, illumined by the dancing light of the lantern it bore and by occasional flashes of lightning. He was plowing steadily toward the shed, splashing through the puddles in the way and bent low against the storm. More through fear that something would happen to him than for any other cause, I turned up my coat collar, managed to tug the door shut behind me in spite of the gusts, and ran down the faint path of light cast by his lantern.

He was just entering the shed as I splashed up to him. Short as the distance was, I was out of breath when I reached the big, swinging door he thrust open. It was on the lee side of the shed and only quivered and protested a little at some odd burst of wind which roared down over the eaves. Inside, the air was still enough except for an occasional draft rushing through the half open door, but the whole place seemed in a sort of vibration, due to the rattle of the rain on the roof. That the place was equipped with electric lights was evi-

dent as soon as we entered, for Grinnell touched a button and the interior of the shed burst suddenly into view.

On all sides were collections of the metal litter common to machine shops. But right in the center was the object which would catch any eye at once. It was an air ship of metal—in form exactly like the usual dirigible, except that what would have been the cigar-shaped bag in the usual air craft was here much smaller and apparently made of sheet steel. There were two propellers of heavy steel and two side wheels or paddles like those on the Mississippi river steamers. These were ingeniously arranged so that the blades presented their edges to the wind on the upward and forward stroke, but were whirled on the hub until they were broadside to the wind in the downward and backward drive. Below the cigar-shaped upper body was a stout metal platform containing what seemed to be an ordinary six-cylinder auto motor. The upper body and car were connected with stout steel supports. The body rested on these when the car was on the ground, while the latter, in turn, was upheld by them when the machine was in flight. Grinnell explained this in as matter-of-fact fashion as though he was exhibiting a new form of farm machinery.

"There's no need to economize weight," he said. "That's why everything's so heavy. The body there is hollow and filled with—well, that's the secret. When the substance in there has an electric current running through it, it becomes a negative force. It is repelled by the earth instead of attracted. It can bear up many times its own weight so long as the power is kept up—just as a heavy skyrocket is kept going up so long as a fraction of its weight in powder is fizzing behind it."

"But what's all this about—what did Frazer take up this work for? Why did he keep this invention down here? How did he discover it?" I asked in hurried perplexity.

"If you can't see the money in a thing like that I can't explain what it's about," said Grinnell impatiently. "He'll tell you himself what he's gone into it for and how he discovered it. As for keeping it down here, that's easy.

"This place is about as secluded as one could want for making tests. Of course, if we had come down here in some mysterious way, we'd have had spies following us all the time. Frazer simply told the rubes down here that he was interested in autos. He took a lot of them out for rides in his car—that old 1907 model he's got. He explained the motor to them very carefully.

"Then he told a long tale about how he wanted to utilize the gas from the explosion in the cylinders over and over—he sort of hinted at some turbine scheme. He even got the local blacksmiths to alter parts of some old motors and try experiments with them. He didn't make any secret place of this shed. He used to have half the neighborhood up here and would show them a motor's working. He had been in the newspaper business long enough to know that if you want to keep anything a secret, the best way is to make a bluff about showing your hand.

"Well, when he got to making experiments with gasoline and asked the men who came up here to steer clear of the shed, on account of the amount of loose explosive lying around that a spark from a pipe might set off, nobody thought anything of it. A few loafers from the town come up here every day to cadge a drink or two. I've always received them well. So if they do talk about us, they never imagine we have anything to conceal—and the mere fact of their smoking has been reason enough for keeping away from the shed. That's been going on since we started work on this thing. All our flights are at night, and not a soul suspects anything yet. If we had tried to set this up in a desert or had made any mystery of it, you'd have found a newspaper reporter hid under every bench in the place. Look how the Wrights had a bunch watching them up in Iowa as soon as it was known they were trying to conceal the workings of their first aeroplane."

All this time he had been tinkering about the machine, and now he cranked up the motor. The propellers and side wheels were so set that they were clear of the ground when the car was at rest, and they whirled around at a terrific rate when he turned on the power.

In the fore part of the machine was a steering wheel, connected by chains with the long metal rudder which projected behind. Before the little stool on which the operator was intended to sit was a row of batteries, fixed securely to a metal shelf.

"There's our elevating device," explained the machinist. "If the driver wants to go up, he just cuts off the current from the rear of the body, which is in sections. This sags down instantly, leaving the front end to bear it up. The driving power of the propellers and wheels does the rest. To sink, while in the air, the front end is cut off from the current. To alight, the current is shut out of bow and stern, and the main compartment—the middle one—alone is electrified. The battery is so graduated that it leaves just enough weight in the machine to sink softly down and land without a jar. Now, here's where I go out."

He had opened the other half of the swinging door while talking. A touch on the plunger of the central battery caused the machine to quiver where it stood. He grasped one of the upright supports in one hand and rocked the mass of metal as though it were the flimsiest of material.

"It's almost as light as air now," he said indifferently, and started the motor, operating one of the propellers. Although the number of revolutions was not great, the machine commenced to glide slowly forward, lifting itself from the floor in little wave-like motions, Grinnell walking beside it and steering it through the open door with one hand. As he passed out into the crashing storm, he waved a hand to signify he would go alone—a fact I had already decided, as I did not care to board the thing—then he stepped lightly into the car. A couple of touches of the plungers and an additional cranking of a second motor suddenly transformed the mass of steel into what seemed a creature of life. And with a buzz of motors and propellers and a swish of parting air as it rose sharply through the gale and rain, Frazer's airship plunged into the storm.

What I saw that night can never be told nor would it be believed if I set it

down. For it seemed that every physical law governing such matters was violated. Grinnell had taken no lantern. But in the flashes of lightning I could see the machine quivering the stormy sky faster than any bird that ever flew. Now he would come down wind with the speed of the gale itself, only the hum of the motors sounding for an instant as the car flew by. Then I would see the flash of the lightning on its dripping metal body a mile away beyond the hill and, in what seemed the next instant, the machine would be cutting the air over my head, its velocity against the wind producing a whine like the shriek of a shell from a twelve-inch gun. Grinnell afterward explained that, on such an occasion, it was necessary to crouch behind the steel bulwark of the car, out of the wind. Finally, after some gyrations of the car which seemed actually like pyrotechnics, so perfect was his control of the massive thing, Grinnell brought the airship easily down in the mud at my feet.

It was an hour later that I sat, excited and an enthusiastic convert to the new airship, in Frazer's room. I had not even attempted to change my drenched clothing, but sat listening with all ears as he told of his discovery.

"Scientists can laugh at folklore all they please," he said, "but I have always firmly believed that there must have been foundation for the old tales. People in those days had little imagination. They lived in a time of facts. The idea of there being such a thing as a dragon was once scoffed at. But a good many remains of the ichthyosaurus have been found in late years—and it is practically identical in appearance with the dragons of legend and must have had the same habits.

"The same scientists laughed at the story of Troy. They've quit laughing since the city itself was discovered under the ruins of several others and since the tomb of Clytemnestra has been found. It's the tendency of to-day to throw slurs at everything we don't know ourselves.

"I was always impressed with the old so-called fable of the lodestone—that supposedly mythical stone that threw its influence away from the earth

when pointed in a certain way. Swift gave a good idea of the old belief in his voyage to Laputa—that kingdom floating on a lodestone. What made me regard the old tale seriously was the fact that the belief in such things as lodestones was held by so many uncivilized nations in widely divided parts of the earth. I felt sure that there must be something behind so much tradition. When radium was discovered and another unknown power brought to light, I became convinced there was truth behind what is generally regarded as superstition.

"We have authentic proof that Douglas Home, the American medium, had some power of destroying gravity in his trances. Reputable witnesses, more than half a century ago in England, saw him float across streets without any means of support—on one occasion he passed from one third-story window to another in this fashion. In spite of all the argument over her ability, no one seems to deny that Eusapia Paladino has some power we can't explain. And this seems to include levitation of objects by destroying gravity.

"It was in Egypt, that original home of mystery, that I accidentally stumbled on the discovery that will put America in the forefront of all nations. What will Japan's navy be worth if a machine like this goes swooping across its fleet at night, dropping bombs containing tons of dynamite on each deck? Weight is of no importance here. I could carry a twelve-inch cannon, suspended muzzle downward, if necessary, and fire through unprotected decks. What machine guns, on a stormy night like this, could affect the flight of a car that you have witnessed? If necessary, the lower portion of the car could be armored, to stop possible shots.

"I remember while I was visiting the pyramid of Cheops in Egypt that I got to thinking about the forces used in constructing so vast a monument. I had been taken down the long passage, leading to the former tomb of the king, and was looking about me, while the Arab guide spouted a lot of fake history, when I happened to glance at some of the stone paneling where the huge blocks were not set tightly together.

Something was glistening inside, and with the point of a lead pencil I pried out a scrap of metal. I thought it was a piece of bronze—probably the fragment of some old mason's instrument—and thrust it carelessly into my pocket as a souvenir.

"One thing had impressed me strongly during the inspection of the interior. That was, that although mere scratches left by the tools of those who had built the pyramids centuries ago were plainly visible, no marks could be seen on any stone, such as must have been caused by cables, if they had been lifted by derricks, or such as would have arisen from the grinding of one stone upon another as they were lowered into place.

"I had heard theories of the fashion in which the pyramids were built. No stone like that of which they are constructed exists in all the region around them. Evidently the big blocks were brought down the Nile on rafts. The impossibility of hauling such masses of stone over the soft banks of the river has led many to think they were raised into position by hydraulic means—that wooden towers or standpipes were erected after the stones forming the base had been laid and that the other blocks were lifted up inside these on rafts, water being pumped in from a canal, leading from the Nile. Even this would necessitate shoving the stones into place in some way. How was it none of them showed the marks?

"I had emptied the contents of my touring suit on a table in my room while I was reflecting, in preparation for changing my clothes. I had piled the coins in a little heap upon the scrap of metal from the pyramid and was absently poking at them with the electric pocket lamp I had used that afternoon. I had unscrewed the lense to renew the little electric bulb inside and forgotten to put in the new one. I must have pressed the little button on the lamp unconsciously as a projecting tongue of the metal made connections with the wires leading to the battery—and the next instant *the coins and the metal base were floating in the air!*

"There is no need of telling of the long search for ingredients to compose this metal—metallic alloy, rather. I

found them at length and they are of the simplest description. I don't know whether the Egyptians knew of electricity or not, but there must have been some force in the old days like that utilized in wireless telegraphy, which I believe is entirely distinct from the kind sent over wires. Don't we read in various old classics of the fires from heaven being brought down to light the altars? Do you suppose they'd monkey with lightning? That would be playing with fire, indeed. And wires would have been too obvious. We would have found some traces of them.

"Lumholz, the Australian explorer, speaks of the fashion in which news of his approach was sent ahead from tribe to tribe of aborigines, many of whom had never seen a white man. Those savages understood the principle of the boomerang, which Europeans didn't. Couldn't they also have known some means, some wireless telegraphy of their own, for sending messages? Maybe it was the science of sound by which certain notes, made by rapping on trees, were made to travel further than we can send sound to-day. Scientists have said that a vast array of huge, unknown instruments, found in prehistoric ruins of China, were astronomical instruments. How do they know they weren't used for something approaching wireless telegraphy?

"Bob, these men wasting time over aeroplanes are simply playing with old toys. Think of the story of Daedalus and Icarus. Would that yarn have arisen among a people who did not understand modern mechanics unless they had actually seen a crude airship at some time? Daedalus seems to have mastered flights with it. Icarus probably struck some conflicting air currents and plunged down to death just as Hubert Le Blon did in Spain when his motor stopped. I don't imagine Icarus had any motor, but if Daedalus made successful flights he must have had some means to keep his car going.

"It's a different invention from an aeroplane that will be useful in war. And I'm going to send this machine to the Coast to take part in that big meet at San Francisco. I'm too sick to go myself. But I'll send Grinnell. Then we'll

see whether Bleriot, Delagrangé, Tissandier and the others can do better work in the air.

"I've found how to work up this metal, but I think it does better work pulverized. That's what's in the bottle. The bottom and sides of that safe are lined with it. I'm going to take it all out, though, so that in case anything should occur if I get in another spell of delirium, no one will happen on it.

"Bob! Since I've been working on this, you can't imagine how I hate to see stories of lost gravity appear. I read one of Stockton's tales not long since, and it made me shake to think some inventor might take up the subject seriously. It's the same way with a lot of these forecast stories of what may happen in the future. I'm always afraid some one will get a hint. Now, can't you get the managing editor to send you to cover that meet at 'Frisco?"

Four weeks later I stood on the deck of the cruiser *Cleveland*, lately sent back from the Philippines. The cruiser was steaming slowly in the deeper portion of San Francisco Bay and was nearly opposite the middle of the Golden Gate. Commander Rodman had given me permission to visit the ship and I stood watching the air navigators as they swooped about in trial flights the day before the big exhibition. Grinnell had brought Frazer's entry to the coast in clever style, flying only by night and carrying his own provisions. The speed of the machine made the trip easy. I had preceded him by train and had secured quarters for him near the Emeryville race track. So many of the aerialists were secretive about details of their motors and mechanism that nothing was thought of the fact that we guarded the place where the machine was kept.

To prevent any one from knowing the nature of Frazer's craft, a "fake" aeroplane had been sent to me by express and solemnly installed in the shed. Grinnell, upon learning the location of the shed, brought the real entry there by night. To keep its true construction from being guessed, he had fitted it up with a pair of imitation wings. With these stubby attachments he was now giving his motor a try-out over the Bay.

"I have seen Latham and Pelterie in monoplanes and Curtiss in a biplane so small it seemed the wings could never support them," remarked one of the *Cleveland's* officers who was standing near me, "but I've never seen such a tiny spread as that machine shows."

"What astonishes me is the way it cuts through the air," said another officer; "I saw Knabenshue in a dirigible at St. Louis a few years ago, but his machine drifted with the wind. This one does not seem to."

This latter remark made me fear that he might guess the composition of the machine. Frazer had explained its immobility in a high wind by saying that although gravity was destroyed, the weight of the metal still asserted itself in a lateral way—just as a thin sheet of metal could be skimmed across a strong wind that would instantly have uptilted a piece of cardboard served in the same fashion.

I did not want anything known about the entry until after the competition. It was Frazer's idea of a grand climax to completely overshadow all other craft with his oddly-winged machine, making opponents believe they were competing against an aeroplane. It was his design to have Grinnell strip off the wings when at a vast height, thus causing consternation among the spectators—exciting a sensation which would call every one's attention to the car. This done, he planned to sell the invention to the Government. And, as an illustration, Grinnell carried in a special belt the little leather case in which was the original fragment of metal found in the pyramids and the bottle with the powdered solution.

As Grinnell approached the surface of the bay in one of his swoops, I signaled to him to approach. I had purposely drawn to the stern of the vessel, where I could speak without being overheard, and noticed with annoyance that not only were some sailors crowding down the deck to see the machine at closer range, but that a tug, in service by the press, was rapidly approaching. In the bow stood a newspaper man known both to Grinnell and myself, and I swore under my breath to see him slow in response to this man's signal. With

engines stopped, he came floating down to the stern of the cruiser just as the bells rang in the tug's engine room and she came up slowly under her own momentum.

"Hey, Grinnell! And you, Bob!" yelled the man on the tug's deck. "A bit of news came in just before I left the office. The man who entered that machine, Frazer, is dead—kicked the bucket two hours ago from an attack of malarial fever and heart failure!"

The brutal suddenness of the news unnerved Grinnell completely. His sudden start knocked from the shelf before him the batteries connected with the forepart of his machine and, still driven by the slowly moving engines, the prow sagged downwards and pointed toward the Bay. He made one wild reach toward the lever, stopping the motor, and as he did so his hand passed between the wires connected with the other compartments of the craft and snapped them clean off. Amid a cry of horror from those on board the cruiser and warning yells from the tug, the vast mass of metal splashed sullenly into the Bay, dragging him with it. Before a boat could be lowered from either cruiser or tug, not even a ripple marked the spot where the greatest discovery of the age rested.

In the excitement of the time, no one thought of taking observations to locate the spot. And by the time we reached the shore I knew that until the waters were gone from the bay itself the secret would remain with Grinnell and his machine.

"Dragged down by the weight of his motor," remarked one officer, as we landed at the pier. I nodded sadly. Who would now believe the truth, even if I told them? I would simply brand myself as insane—just as I had believed Frazer to be crazy when he first told me of the machine.

"At all events," said the same officer consolingly, as we took a parting drink near the quay, "that friend of yours had entered a great invention. You could tell that by the way it was handled. It's too bad it's lost."

And though I reflected he was speaking more truth than he would ever know, I could only again nod silently

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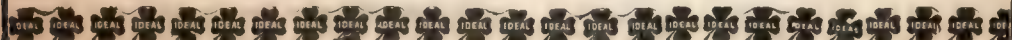
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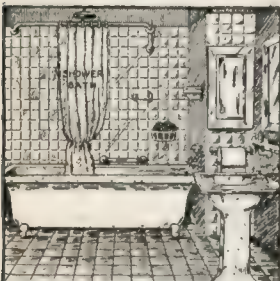
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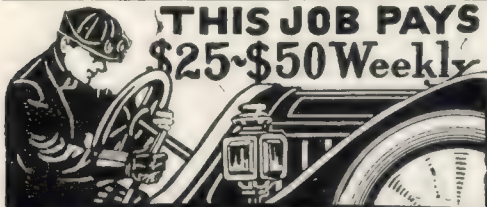
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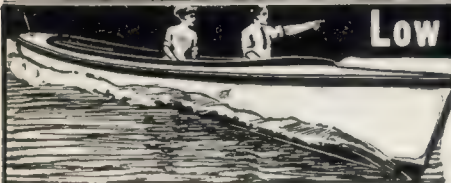
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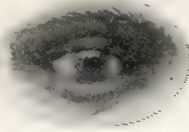
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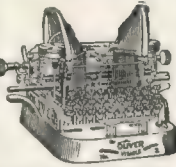
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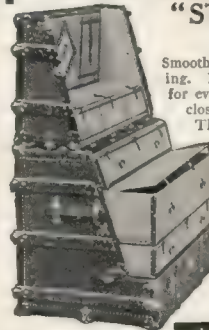
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Flower Drops is the most exquisite perfume ever produced. Made from the no alcohol; as the odor of a thousand blossoms and lasts for weeks.
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Take for example the chair shown in the illustration. You simply put the four assembled sections together, (two sides, front and back) slip the cushion in place, and by this act you have reduced the cost of that piece of furniture exactly, yes, more than half.

You ask: How does this method reduce the price?

FIRST—You pay but one profit only—the manufacturer's profit. All retailers' profits and expenses are done away with.

SECOND—The freight rate on furniture shipped in this manner is very low—about one-quarter of that charged on completed furniture, which charges are always included in the dealer's price to you.

THIRD—The finishing and packing charges are reduced to a minimum.

FOURTH—The size of the factory and therefore the expense of maintenance is reduced, no enormous storage space being necessary. This naturally reduces the manufacturing cost.

Send today for our new catalog No. 12 which shows an extensive line of furniture for every room in the house, club, or office, each piece backed by our Guarantee of Satisfaction or your money refunded.

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You always find good fishing holes when without a rod—or fine game when minus a gun. No fishing outfit is complete without a good, handy gun, and

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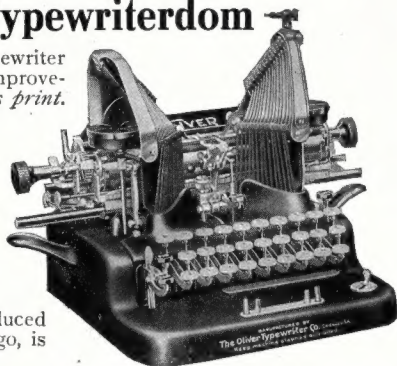
as Local Agent for New Printype Oliver Typewriter

—the Latest Wonder in Typewriterdom

On top of all the innovations that have given The Oliver Typewriter such amazing success and sales, we have placed the crowning improvement—PRINTYPE! The Oliver Typewriter now *typewrites print*.

To the first acceptable man in each locality where we have no local agent, we offer the *exclusive agency* for The Oliver Typewriter, which carries with it absolute control of all sales of Printype Oliver Typewriters in the territory assigned.

Think of the money-making possibilities of an agency which enables you to step into a man's office and say: "I represent the only typewriter in the world that successfully typewrites print!"



Overwhelming Public Demand for Printype

Printype, the beautiful new type face, unobtrusively introduced to the public by The Oliver Typewriter Company a year ago, is today the reigning favorite in Typewriterdom.

The beauty—the individuality—of Printype has turned the heads of some of the greatest business executives of the country.

Printype — OLIVER Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

If you have not had the pleasure of an introduction to Printype ask for a copy of our pamphlet—

"A Revolution in Typewriter Type"

Printype is an adaptation, for the typewriter, of the regular book type universally used on printing presses.

An old friend in a captivating new dress—the last word in typewriter type-style. It is twice as artistic and easy to read as the old-style, sharp, thin outline letters and numerals used on all other typewriters.

Although The Printype Oliver Typewriter is worth a premium, we placed the complete machine on the market at the regular catalog price.

The effect was electrical. Inquiries came thick and fast. Demands for demonstrations kept our Local Agencies working at high tension. Sales jumped. Public appreciation of the innovation was so impressively shown in actual orders that today one-third of our total output of Oliver Typewriters are "Printypes."

Belongs Exclusively to the Oliver

The Oliver Typewriter Company originated "Printype." We control it. The Oliver Typewriter

Rush Agency Application

Applications should be mailed promptly, as the territory is being assigned very rapidly. Interesting literature, including the "Printype Book" and "The Opportunity Book," together with complete information regarding Local Agency Plan, will be sent by first mail.

Address Agency Department

(107)

The Oliver Typewriter Company, 291 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago

is the only writing machine in the world that successfully *typewrites print*.

This triumph in typewriter type, added to the numerous other exclusive features of The Oliver Typewriter, greatly increases the value of our Local Agency Franchise. It puts our great Sales Organization still farther in the lead.

It's Your Supreme Opportunity

We distribute Oliver Typewriters through a world-wide Agency System. Each Local Agent is given exclusive control of all sales of new Oliver Typewriters in the territory assigned, during the entire life of the arrangement. The demand for demonstrations of The Printype Oliver Typewriter necessitates a heavy increase in our force of Local Agents.

Every city, every town, every village must be quickly assigned, so that the vast number of inquiries that are pouring into the General Offices may have prompt, personal attention. This is undoubtedly the greatest business opportunity of your life. Ask for the details of our Exclusive Agency Proposition. Get posted on the profit-possibilities. Remember that a Local Agency Contract is an exclusive Franchise that entitles you to all the profit on every sale made in the specified territory.

"17 Cents a Day" Booms Sales

As local agent for the Oliver Typewriter you can offer the liberal, attractive terms of "17 Cents a Day." You can accept any make of old machine your customer may own, to apply on the small first payment.

We do not surround our Local Agents with annoying rules and restrictions. In the territory assigned them, they are given full control. Loyal, efficient service wins generous recognition. Exceptional ability is rewarded by promotion to more important positions in the Oliver Organization.

Whether you can give your entire time to the work or only an hour or two a day, you cannot afford to miss this wonderful money-making opportunity.



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Crisp, golden-brown

Post Toasties

with strawberries and cream

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